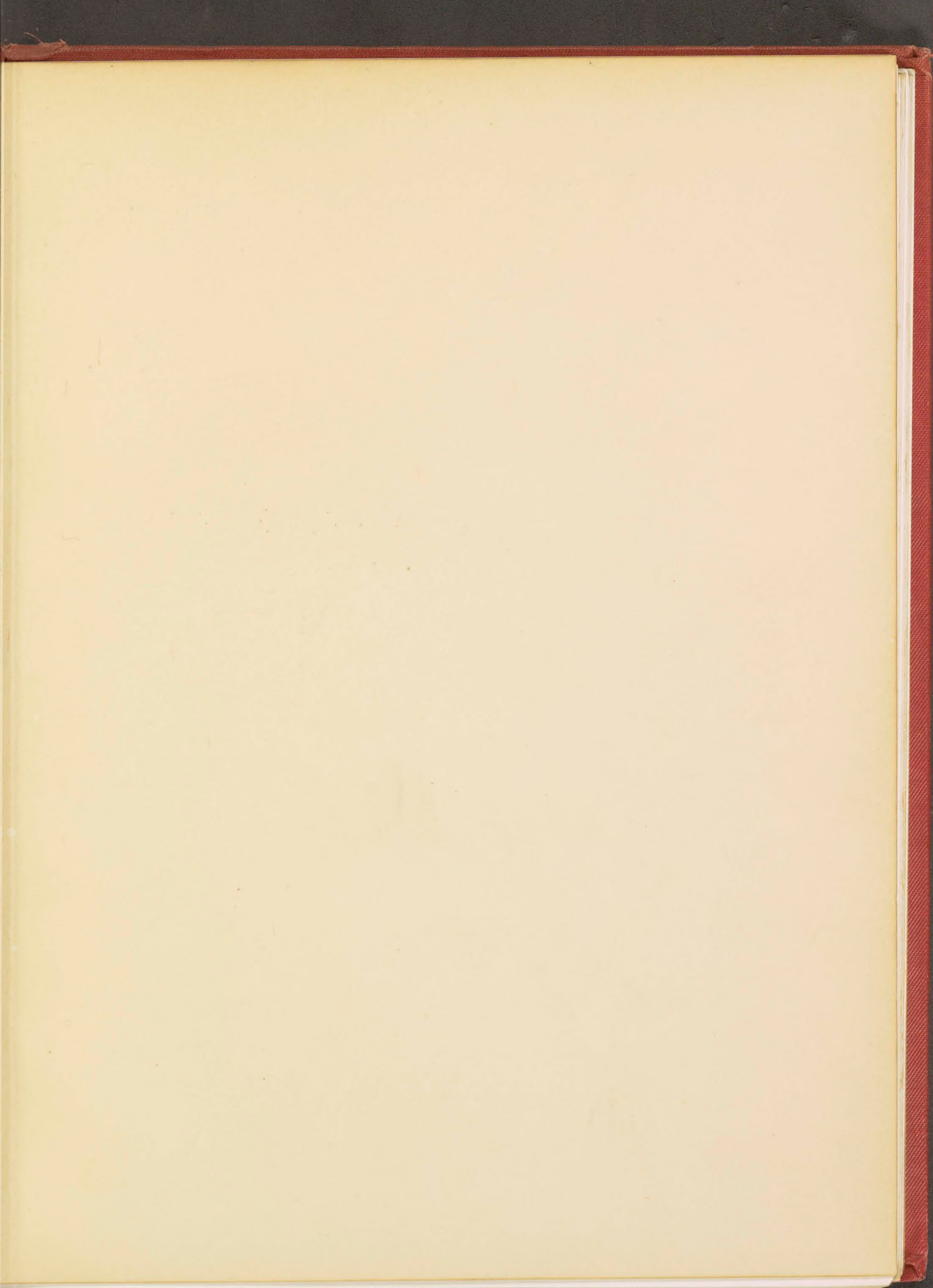


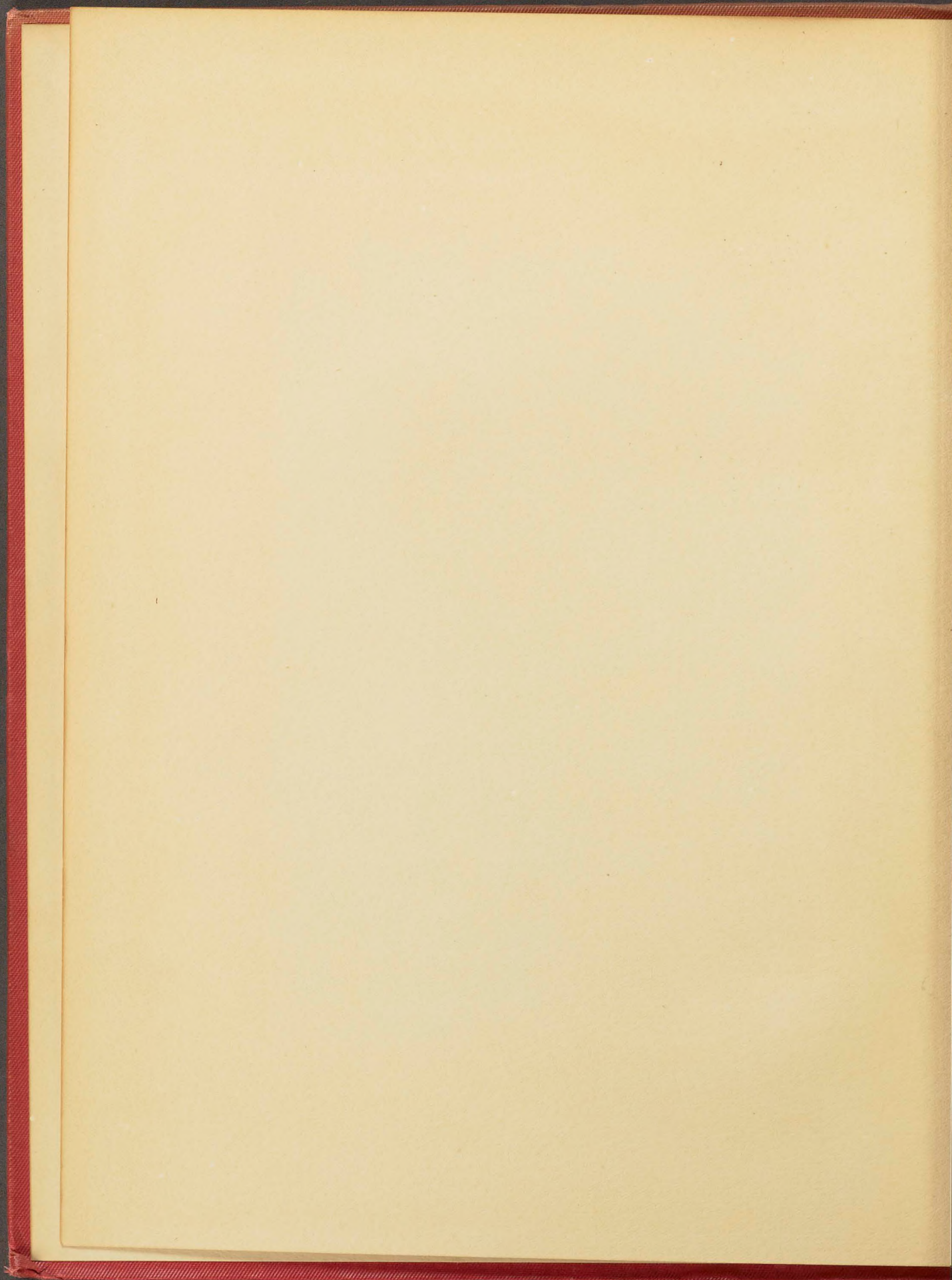
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THE LIFE STORY OF
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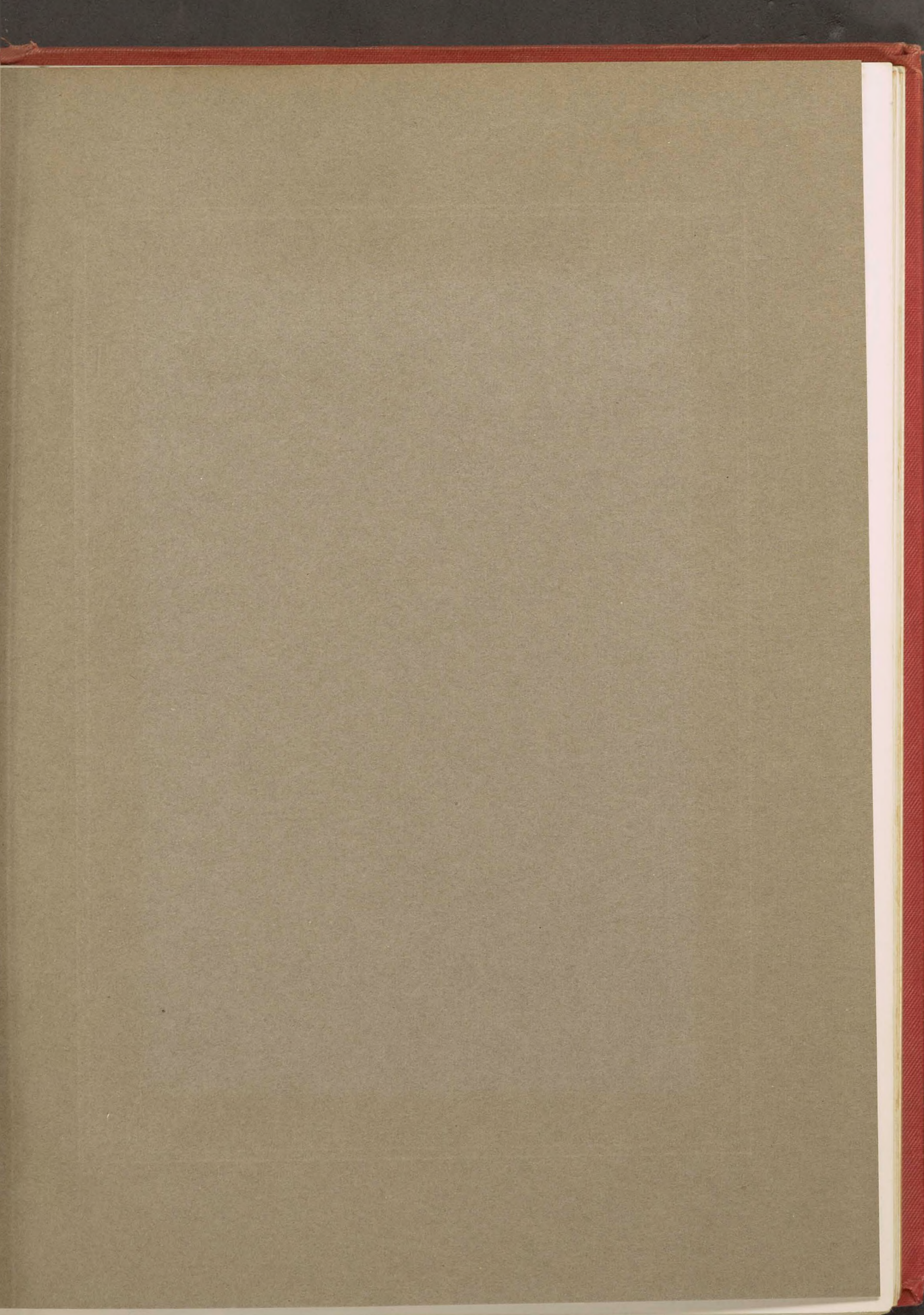






The Life of
Sir Joseph B. Robinson,
Bart.







Sir JOSEPH ROBINSON, Bart.

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Memories, Mines and Millions

BEING THE LIFE OF
Sir JOSEPH B. ROBINSON, Bart.



Compiled and Edited by
LEO WEINTHAL, C.B.E.,
Editor of "The African World."

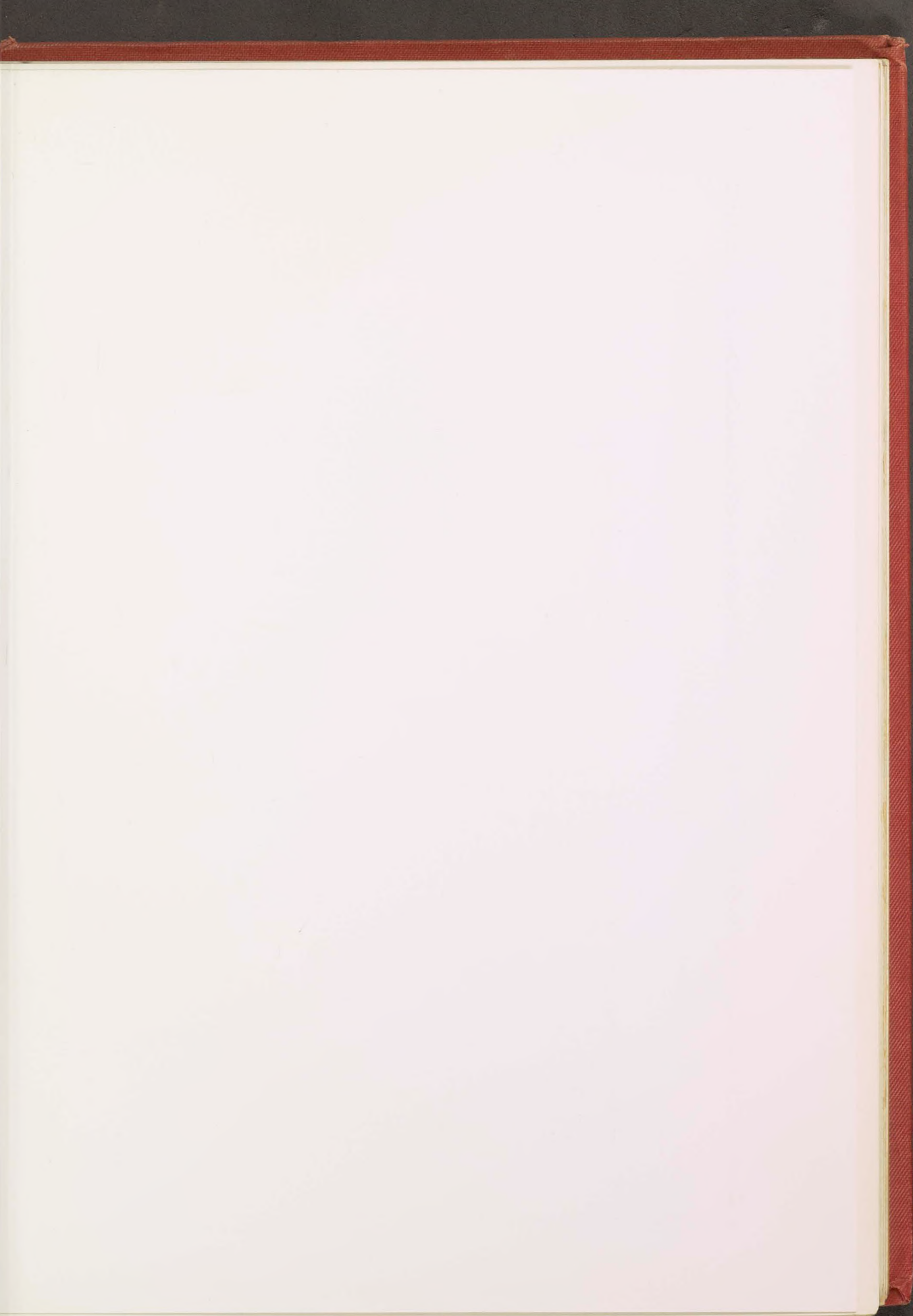


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“ SOUTH AFRICA ”

By Sir J. B. Robinson, Bart.

Land of my Birth ! Sweet memories hail thee,
Scenes of my youth, so fair and bright,
Shall I e'er forget thou caressed me
From my birth, a wee tiny mite ?

With thy growth I have grown since childhood,
Mid scenes and years that have flown,
All are impressed on my manhood,
To thee I owe all that I own.

My youth, inspired by thy richness,
In adventure I sought to engage,
An element enshrined in thy greatness
Entranced all the youth of my age.

Race-hatred hath torn thee asunder,
Thy soil drenched in blood—inhuman sight—
Borne down by carnage and plunder,
My thoughts are of thee on Old Year's night.

Bonds of kinship have been broken,
Ties of home-life all have flown,
Wounds of strife remain wide open,
And Friendship now unknown.

In the coming year God give us grace
And shed on us a righteous glamour,
Bring Boer and Briton face to face,
Forget the past and end War's clamour.

True would be the heart's pulsation
Beating to the joyous sound,
Boer and Briton one in nation,
Peace, thank God . . . clasp hands all round.

A
DAUGHTER'S
TRIBUTE

I HAVE JUST READ THE MANUSCRIPT OF MY FATHER'S LIFE AND AM CHARMED WITH IT. IT IS AN ELOQUENT TESTIMONY OF A GREAT AND STRENUOUS LIFE IN WHICH I HAVE SHARED MANY HOURS OF CLOSE AND CONSTANT COMPANIONSHIP, THE COMPANIONSHIP OF A GREAT INTELLECT, A VIVID RACONTEUR, A DEEP THINKER, WITH A KEEN MEMORY, A VIBRANT PERSONALITY, A BORN FIGHTER WITH DEEPLY RELIGIOUS FEELINGS, ENDOWED WITH A BIG HEART AND A VERY LOVABLE DISPOSITION.

IDA LABIA.



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“Achter die Berg.” A typical scene near Capetown.

S.A.R. Photo

PREFACE

By THE EDITOR

To-day few of the great Pioneers of our own times in South Africa are surviving, but amongst them is happily the venerable figure of Sir Joseph Robinson, whose romantic personality has dominated the development of the Sub-Continent since 1860, and who is still in the twilight of a long and distinguished life privileged to witness the almost incredible and magnificent progress of his birth-land, in the successful development of whose resources he took such a conspicuous part.

The quest of those modern Grails—viz., a great reputation and great wealth—has in South Africa had many a special romance of its own during the last six decades.

The pioneers of the Cape have a particular claim to fame, for coupled with and admitting a certain element of luck, they fought their way to renown and fortune by devoting many years of unremitting toil, often overcoming veritable mountains of difficulties with careful planning, dogged perseverance and by frequently displaying considerable personal courage to attain their goal.

Such is the story of most of the men often described as the Magnates of South Africa. None of the attributes just mentioned can be denied to the subject of the life story placed on record in this volume, of which the biographical facts were willingly supplied to the Editor by the distinguished octogenarian baronet, with whom he has had the privilege of an undisturbed friendship for nearly four decades.

Truly the life's record of Sir Joseph Robinson is unique in its varied and romantic interest. Son of a British yeoman settler, one of the gallant band who landed at Algoa Bay in 1820, he was born in the Karoo amongst the Tafelkopjes of the midlands in the old Cape Colony. At seventeen years of age he was fighting with a burgher commando of the Orange Free State in the fierce Basuto War of 1865. Two years later we find him on the alluvial diamond diggings on the Vaal, and from then onwards in the van of public life in Kimberley, in which he was a combatant figure and in which he left many outstanding records of public service. In 1880 he was elected Mayor of the diamond city, in 1882 its representative in the Cape Parliament and in every great movement of the early days of the Diamond Fields whether as Chairman of the Diggers' Protection Association and Anti-Annexation League, the Empire League or the Board for the Protection of Mining Interests, he took the lead

with virile energy and respected by all. His famous motto was "SERVICE," which he always placed above working for his own interest.

In July, 1886, came the call from the North, from the lonely veld in the Southern Transvaal known as the Ridge of the White Waters where a strange new auriferous formation had been located. "J.B.R." responded promptly and lost very few days in reaching the spot. Strong in financial resources, and in the prime of physical health, he sped to the Witwatersrand, the alleged new African Eldorado, then mostly composed of a locality in which a few mud huts, many tents, iron sheds and a fleet of ox waggons spelt the first mining location known as Ferreira's Camp. That old mining camp of 1886 is to-day one of the greatest cities of the British Empire South of the Equator with 200,000 inhabitants. A mile or two west of Ferreira's he acquired the farm Langlaagte and built the first stone house, calling it "Langlaagte Restante," and sank his shafts to the deeper levels of the slanting reefs, confident in his own conviction as to their continuity and organising their exploitation with far sighted enterprise. Happily the capricious Divinity smiled on the courageous leading pioneer of the Rand fields, the man whose white helmet soon became known throughout the land. The old Boers knew him well, for he had visited the Lydenburg district ten years before, during the alluvial gold rush at Pilgrim's Rest, about which time his brother William, who was farming in the Middleburg district had opposed the Revd. Burgers as a well supported candidate in the Presidential election of the Republic.

Reverting to the start of the great Rand Industry the story of the Langlaagte estate, the Robinson Mine, of which he was the Chairman with Alfred Beit as a Director, and the Randfontein Estates, has ever since been a record of immense and profitable gold production running into many millions sterling, and coming as a surprise to the world. Sir Joseph Robinson's subsequent record is the story of the rise and progress of Johannesburg and its vast industry, which throbbing over sixty miles of auriferous reef from Boksburg to Krugersdorp soon made itself the pivot of the economic and political life of the sub-continent.

In the Politics of the South African Republic for the dozen years preceding the Boer War, Sir Joseph took a keen but always moderate interest. In 1893, after the death of Mr. A. H. Nellmapius, one of the most progressive agricultural pioneers of the Transvaal, Sir Joseph acquired at my personal request after a few moments' conversation, the newspaper known as the *Pretoria Press*, which in its political lines was the semi-official daily organ of President Kruger's Government. I remember the transaction well, and the words Sir Joseph used to me on the occasion on the stoep of the Pretoria Club.

"I am not buying this paper for any political purpose, but only with one object. The President and the people of this country need candid friendly advice and help at times, and you will devote your activities and attention more than anything else to the task of watching that *no measures shall be permitted to become law by which the potential value and security of the great investments which have been and will be made in this country—be they South African, British or International—be imperilled in any way.*"

"Remember also, that I do not require any favours from the Government in any form. That is what I desire, that is why I have bought the paper. Carry out this mission to best advantage, otherwise you may do whatever you think right."

These instructions were carefully carried out, often under very difficult circumstances, with the abnormally conflicting interests involved during the following turbulent years.

At no time was there any interference from headquarters. No one could have treated us all with greater trust, more fairly or more generously than J.B.R. and it gives me great pleasure to have an opportunity to place this on record. The paper flourished, being splendidly supported both from Johannesburg and Pretoria, and only closed down at the outbreak of the ever regrettable Anglo-Boer War. In the following pages Sir Joseph has supplied us with many fascinating details of his great work in those years. Following Peace being signed at Vereeniging in 1902, his activities, generous help to the burghers and participation in the general recuperative progress of the community are only too well known. Then came Union, in the creation of which he took no small share, and four years later the world-wide eruption of Armageddon, after which he gradually retired from the personal control of his vast enterprises. Though freed from business affairs he maintained his keen personal interest in the ever effervescent current of South African politics, were they party controversies, flag problems or any others. His great faith in the future of South Africa has remained unchanged. A born optimist, he has maintained this outlook throughout a long and eventful life. His basic conviction is an unalloyed faith in the motto of the old colony "Spes Bona" for he is strong in the belief that, as far as South Africa is concerned, the clouds are passing with the bright sunlight of prosperity to shine more than ever on the sub-continent. Thus may the fascinating story of Sir Joseph Robinson be confidently left to the readers of this volume and in conclusion we may recall Jean Paul's famous quotation "Memories form a paradise from which no one can be driven" and wherein, it may be added, the fame of South Africa's great pioneers will ever be secure.

Leo Weiskopf

Trek-Marks on the Sands of Time.

By GEORGE BEET, Kimberley.

"Slow and slow the wagons go by thicket and thorn and pool,
But their thin path traced on the homeless waste is the road of the coming rule ;
And in dread of that track the wild slinks back, and the thief and the beast give place
To the farm and field and the yearly yield of the men of the British race.
Over the sands of the thirsty lands, under a brazen sky,
Where the only law men bow before is the law of the assegai ;
Forth and forth to the dim far north, where the broad Zambezi flows,
Still to-day in the ancient way the rumbling wagon goes."



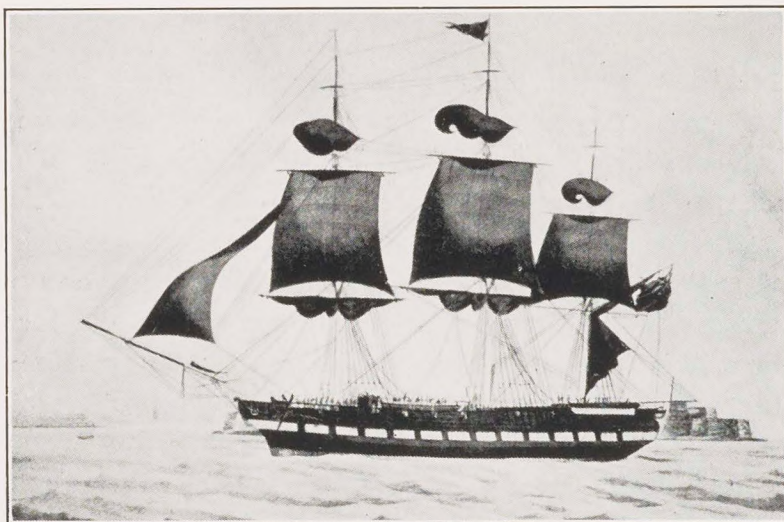
*Drawn by the late
Charles Sheldon.*

CHAPTER I.

EARLY DAYS

Of all the little-known races of the Empire, there can be few whose characters and sentiments are less understood than those of the people who were formerly called South African Englishmen, but who prefer to call themselves English-speaking South Africans—or South Africans *tout court*. It is their peculiar misfortune that they have never produced from their own ranks a writer or a publicist who could give expression to their own personality and ideals, but that their spokesmen have always been drawn from overseas. Even at the present day, the greater part of the English Press of South Africa is controlled by men who live in England, but who require the services of South African organs to protect their financial interests in the sub-continent, and its claim to represent the views of any considerable part of the English-speaking population of the Union is perhaps somewhat shadowy. Even the political policy of South Africa has in the past often been controlled by statesmen whose ambition it was to achieve a brilliant reputation at the Cape, and then to retire to London or the English countryside, leaving the South Africans to clean up the mess. It has consequently been to the interest of many persons to disguise or to slur over the essential differences in temperament and outlook between these birds of passage and the English-speaking section of the permanent population—a section which, in its century and more of occupation, has cast its roots deep into the soil of Africa, and whose members come to look on their country as the land alike of their forbears and of their posterity.

Such an attitude makes for an independent outlook on many matters: for a moderation in racial questions which untravelled Imperialists in Great Britain find it hard to understand; for a dislike of interference from outside which, also, is easily misrepresented; perhaps most of all for a novel view of the events of that sanguinary romance which is called the history of South Africa. But it is not one of these more or less inarticulate people whose life-story is told in this book: one, moreover, whose destiny led him into conflict



The Settler Ship, "Chapman," 1820.



British Settlers landing at Algoa Bay in 1820.

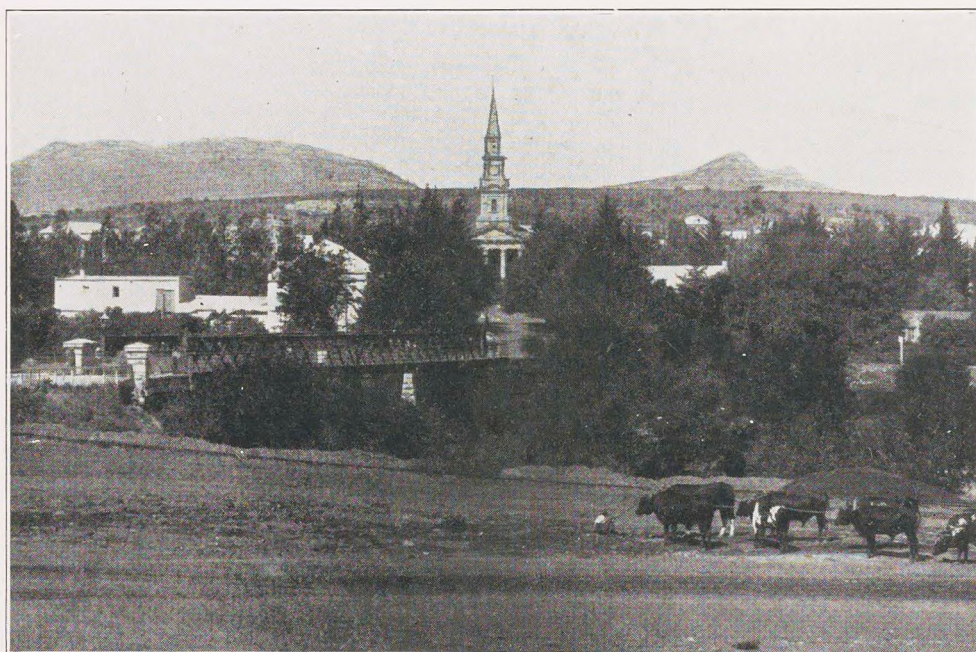
with the arch-champion of influence from without, whose life was mainly a life of combat, and whose South African reserve rendered him an easy prey to calumniators. For the full understanding of such a man and of his views, it is necessary to describe his origins and his upbringing.

About the year 1820, it occurred to the authorities at the Cape that the best means of dealing with the frontier question would be to establish along the borders of the Colony a chain of British settlers, who would form a bulwark against native raids. The British Government agreed to the plan, hoping thus to alleviate in a few cases the distress among the poor which had followed the Napolconic wars. In 1820, accordingly, selected parties of settlers were sent out, and lands were granted to them along the eastern frontier. From such small beginnings originated the present English-speaking population of South Africa, many thousands of whom are descended from the 1820 settlers, and all of whom look on them as the founders of their nation.

Among the emigrants was an English family—father, mother, and children—who had suffered like others from the depression of the time, but who now gladly embraced the opportunity of a new start in surroundings which were then almost totally unknown to the British people. The father and mother both came of sound English stock: yeomen farmers of the southern counties. Such were the parents of Robinson, whose pride it was that he was of pure English blood.

When the Settlers landed in 1820, and for some years afterwards, South Africa was in a terrible state. Kaffirs were over-running the country, burning down farmhouses, seizing all livestock, indulging in massacre, and leaving stark ruin in their trail.

The Robinsons had their share of constant anxiety concerning this fearful menace. Sir Joseph well remembers an occasion when his elder brothers, keen rifle shots, successfully defended their homestead against attacks by a large party of Kaffirs, when all around them they could see burning houses.



CRADOCK, Cape Province.
The birthplace of Sir Joseph Robinson.

Photo : S.A. Railways

The father was away, but the brothers, nothing daunted, took up position on the roof of the house, and exerted their skill at shooting to such purpose that for hours they kept the native marauders at bay.

Ultimately Robinson senior returned with a party of farmers, and completed the rout. To this day, it is a tradition in the family that for a full hour before the father appeared on the scene, Mrs. Robinson encouraged the defenders by averring that she could hear the hooves of the horses carrying her husband and his troop.

It cannot be doubted that the experiences of the early Cape settlers were precisely similar to those endured by the Americans once they made their way into the great Western plains, and of which such stirring and dramatic tales are told to this day.

Sir Joseph Robinson's parents, Robert and Martha, in their middle twenties, accompanied by their four children, the eldest of whom was five years old, came out with the 1820 Settlers in the sailing vessel "Chapman," and landed with the other settlers on the shores of Algoa Bay, now Port Elizabeth.

After a tedious voyage of nearly three months, they cast anchor in sight of the sand dunes on the wild shores of Algoa Bay, and the passengers were rowed ashore through the surf. Here they were met by the Boers of the country—tall, grave, silent men in long blue coats—and taken by ox-wagon to their destinations on the frontier. Robinson's father settled in the district of Cradock, near the little town of that name, in the country which is now called the Midlands of the Cape Province. Cradock, which is now a pleasant, peaceful little town, and the centre of a thriving agricultural and pastoral region, was then but a hamlet in the wilderness, and the difficulties which confronted the settlers, so far from civilisation, were many and great. Unlike many of the others, however, the English yeoman overcame them, and soon rose to be one of the most considerable farmers in the neighbourhood.

These worthy people little dreamt that in their middle age they were to have a son who was destined to bring to light the fabulous riches



An Idyll of the Veld.

Cape Times Photo.

of their adopted country, and to acquire wealth and fame for himself in the process, as the result of his energy and virility.

By some mischance, the nature of which will never be discovered, their name appears on the records of the 1820 Settlers as Robertson, instead of Robinson ; but those were neither the days nor the circumstances in which pedantic accuracy could be expected.

In Cradock, on the 3rd August, 1840, his son Joseph Benjamin Robinson was born. A few days later, the Volksraad of the Republic of Natal wrote its letter to the Governor at the Cape, informing him that the Voortrekkers had now established peace with the native tribes, and asking for the British Government's recognition of the independence of their Republic. This boy, who was thus born when the Great Trek was hardly yet at an end, and in the very year of Dingaan's death, was destined to see the Union of South Africa welcome its armies returning victorious from their share in the struggle against the enemies of Britain.

The town of Cradock, where the boy was born and where he grew to manhood, is situated on the plateau of the Great Karoo. The point should be noted ; for the Karoo is the heart of South Africa, its silent, dusty, oddly-shaped hills, its scant growth of little bushes, its colours changing with the sun, its burning noons and shivering nights—these things are essential Africa. Desolate in appearance, it yet responds abundantly to cultivation ; in that also the type of a land which, with all its beauty and all its austere charm, is yet above all a country of reserves. In these stern surroundings the boy grew tall and strong : grew to a strength of body beyond that of other men, and to the self-reliance and self-sufficiency that were the birthright of the frontiersman's son.

Of his childhood he could remember little. One clear memory was that of his eldest sister, who would often entertain the younger children with stories of life on board the sailing ship in which, at the age of five years, she had made the voyage from England to Algoa Bay. These were tales to enthrall the youngster, who had never seen the sea. Then there came the problem of young Joseph's

education, and a difficult one it was, for there was no English school nearer than the garrison town at Grahamstown. To meet this lack, which was felt by many of the farmers of the day, there grew up a class of travelling schoolmasters, who went from farm to farm, giving instruction to the children on each for a period, then moving on to the next. A farm child would thus receive an education partly from the teaching of its parents, partly from a succession of itinerant schoolmasters. These were often men of some ability, who had got into trouble of some kind in the towns, or who merely shared the then not uncommon dislike of a settled life ; and whatever might be said of their characters, they did often succeed in giving their pupils a solid grounding in the things it was necessary for them to know. The elder Robinson thus gave his children the best education available at the time ; and whatever its limitations may have been, it certainly served them well in after years.

As the boy grew older, he became known among the children of the neighbourhood for his exceptional physical strength, his courage and obstinacy, and (be it added) for a pugnacity beyond the common. Before he was sixteen, he had fought and beaten every boy for miles around, so that before long he won a reputation as the champion fighter of the district. This reputation was to follow him into other spheres, for he was destined to battle his way through life in something of the spirit of an old-time buccaneer, relying upon his force of character, his strength of character, and his iron determination, to take the fortress of success by storm. Indeed, it is said that a nickname of his in later times was " the Old Buccaneer."

One other quality he had which is worth noting. This was his love and mastery of horses. When he grew up he took to breeding horses on his own account, and his first emergence into a kind of fame was as a producer of the best animals of the old Cape breed—now extinct—to be found in the country. These beasts were the wiry little horses, famous for speed and endurance, on which the Voortrekkers had penetrated for hundreds of miles into the interior, and which were then in common use throughout the country. Able to carry a heavy man and his equipment sixty miles a day for many

days in succession, they played a great part in the opening up of the country in the age before railways, besides possessing great military value in that they enabled the commandos to move swiftly in time of war.

When the time came for Robinson to decide upon his career, he elected to become a wool-merchant. In those days, naturally, such a merchant differed widely from his modern successor, with his warehouse and offices at East London or Port Elizabeth, his staff of clerks and typists, and his business conducted largely by telephone and telegraph. Robinson's method of carrying on trade, like that of his contemporaries, was to take his wagons and oxen, his staff of native drivers and servants, and to trek for hundreds of miles through the country, riding beside his wagons, and going off now and then on shooting expeditions. He would stop at the widely scattered farmhouses and carry on trade with their owners in the course of endless conversations: buying principally wool, but also any other farm produce that happened to take his fancy. Such an occupation gave him a knowledge of the country and the people, an understanding of their characters and conditions of life, that nothing else could have done.

Since the Orange Free State was already becoming a considerable producer of wool, Robinson extended his journeys into the territory of the Republic, and came to know its people as well as he knew those of the old Colony. He also bought farms at several places in the Republic, and went in for breeding horses and sheep on his own account. His familiarity with, and consequent friendship for, the people of the Free State, as well as his own combative instinct, led him to assist them in their wars with the Basuto, although, not being a burgher, he was not technically liable to be called out on commando. He had fought in all the native wars of the time, both those of the Colony and those of the Republic. Beginning as a simple citizen-soldier, he quickly rose to positions of command. As a soldier, he was distinguished by his great strength and endurance, as well as by reckless daring, and his force of character made him a good leader of men.

The Basuto War, 1865



The Paramount Chief, Moshesh



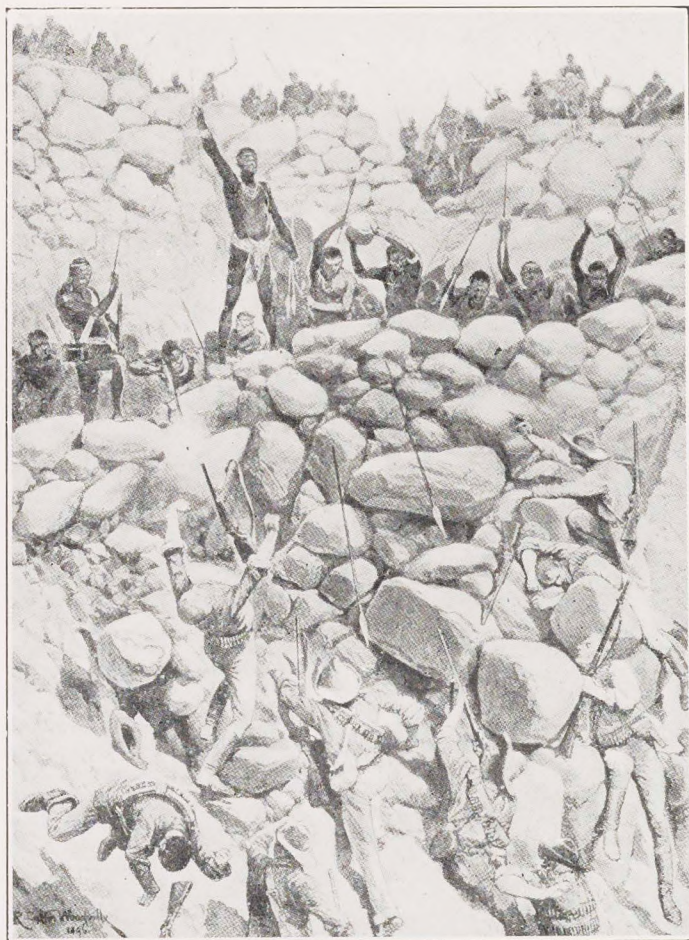
THABA BOSIGO, The Mountain of the Night
The famous stronghold as seen from Morija Mission Station.

Of all the numerous combats in which he took part, the one most vividly remembered is that at which the gallant Louw Wepener—long remembered in South Africa as the bravest of the brave—lost his life. It took place in the early spring of 1865, in the war of the Free State against the Basuto. Robinson was just twenty-five at the time.

The Basuto forces, after stubborn resistance, had been driven back from their outer lines, though only with great difficulty and at considerable cost to the invaders, and had taken up their position on the apparently impregnable natural fortress of Thaba Bosigo: a flat-topped mountain, crowned with precipitous walls of rock, the summit of which could be reached only by a single cleft in the rock. Here the Basutos, having previously collected a supply of grain and live-stock which would enable them to hold out indefinitely, sat down behind their rudely built fortifications and awaited the attack. It should be mentioned that they were well equipped with firearms and skilful in their use.

The Free Staters, under General Fick, opened an artillery bombardment upon the position, and for some time a continual cannonade was kept up upon the face and crown of the mountain, without producing the slightest effect. The enemy were well protected by their natural ramparts and the schanzes they had built of loose stones so that it soon became clear that the artillery alone could not bring about a decision. On the 8th August, accordingly, an attempt was made to take the position by storm. It proved unsuccessful, the burghers being driven back with heavy loss.

On the 15th, it was intended to make another attempt. But finding his forces unprepared, General Fick resolved to abandon the plan for that day, and gave orders for a march round the mountain instead. Commandant Louw Wepener then offered to lead a storming party of volunteers, Commandant Wessels offered to accompany Wepener, and General Fick consented to the plan. Volunteers were called for, and a number responded. Among these was Robinson, who was given the command of the left wing, Wepener



The storming of Thaba Bosigo by Boers and British, 1865.

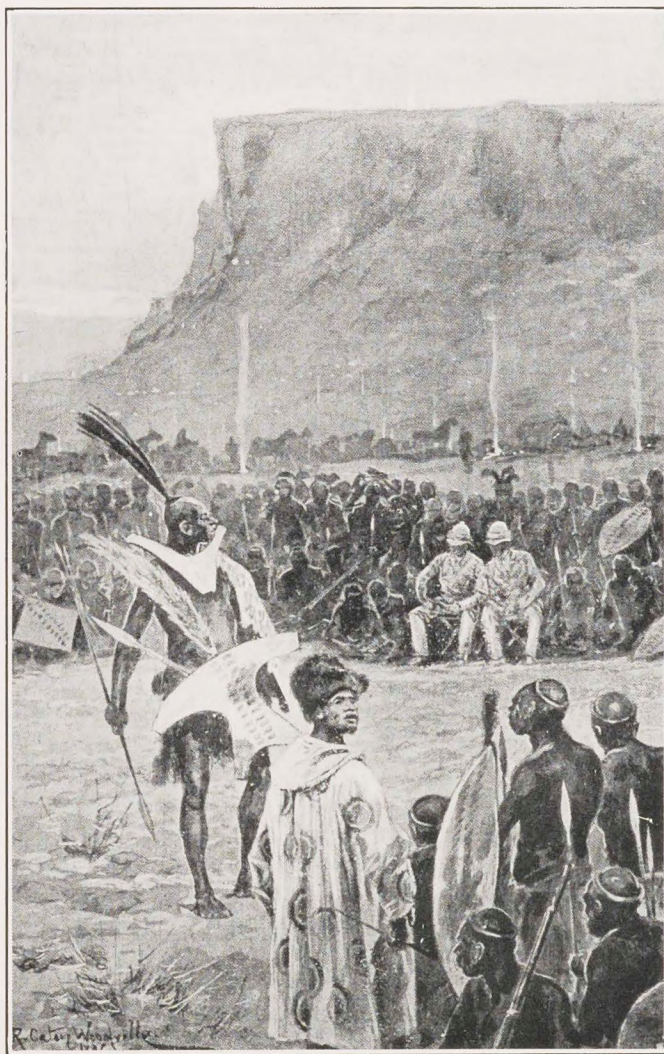
It is generally admitted that but for the heroic death of Commandant LOUW WEPENER this final charge on the stronghold of the Basuto chief Moshesh would have been successful.

being in command of the whole storming party, with Wessels as his second.

A heavy artillery fire was opened upon the face and crown of the mountain above the mission station, under cover of which the stormers crept forward from rock to rock. Robinson's share of the movement was perfectly executed, and the party, in spite of heavy fire from the Basutos, succeeded in reaching the entrance to the steep and narrow cleft which was the only way to the top. This was where the critical part of the attack began, for the volunteers would find themselves exposed to a storm of fire concentrated in a narrow space. To add to their difficulties they found that across the mouth of the cleft a strong stone wall, four or five feet high, had been built, and that smaller walls, behind which parties of the enemy lay completely sheltered from the artillery fire, had been constructed at every few yards between it and the top.

Still Wepener encouraged his men, and they struggled on to attack the wall. Just as they reached it, Wepener fell, shot through the heart, and many of the best men in the party fell with him. But the others pressed on, Robinson among them, and they carried the wall. Commandant Wessels took Wepener's place as leader, and the stormers pressed on to the next obstacle. There was now nothing to be done but to carry each of the barricades in turn, but it was a question whether, if all were to be carried at the same cost, there would be any survivors of the storming party to confront the main body of the enemy at the top. Still Wessels and the volunteers, Robinson among them, struggled on, their ranks thinning every moment, and carried the second barricade. Two or three of the walls were stormed in this way, when Wessels was severely wounded, and found himself obliged to retire from the field. Robinson, who was still unhurt, and the other volunteers pressed obstinately on towards the next barricade. They fought hard for possession of it, but the enemy were encouraged by the sight of the dwindling ranks of the volunteers, and put up a stubborn resistance. The position of the storming party was now hopeless ; it would be impossible to reach their objective, and even if, by a miracle, they were

Basuto War Memories.



A later Conference at the Stronghold of Thaba-Bosigo.

From Poultney Bigelow's "White Man's Africa."

to achieve this, it could only be with the loss of so many men that the enemy would have no difficulty in dealing with the few survivors. Robinson and his fellows pressed on with hopeless courage; but the attempt was futile and they knew it. A few paces further, under searching fire, they struggled on. Then they stopped. The tide of the attack faltered, ceased, and turned to the ebb. The survivors of the ill-starred storming party made their way down the mountain-side again and regained their camp. The attack on Thaba Bosigo had failed, for the second time.

It is curious that, in all the fighting in which Robinson took part, and in which he rather courted than shunned the post of greatest danger, he was never even slightly wounded. In this particular attack, for instance, his comrades were falling thick all round him, and his huge frame offered a fine target to the enemy, yet he escaped without a scratch. The only memento of his campaigns was the deafness which attacked him in middle life, and which he attributed to the hardships and exposure he underwent at this time, more particularly those of the winter fighting in the bleak and inhospitable mountains of Basutoland.

The Basuto war having at last dragged its slow length to a dubious conclusion, he returned to the Colony and his wool-merchant's business. But by now he had begun to weary of what seemed to him so prosaic and humdrum an existence, and it was not long before in 1868, he set out again on a trek beyond the Orange River, partly to visit his farms, partly to do a little trading, but chiefly to see what might turn up. And at the back of his mind was the thought that perhaps, if he were lucky, he might come across the wonderful diamond deposit, which everyone was talking about since the discovery of a few stray stones a short time before, but which, though all were certain of its existence, nobody seemed able to find. At this point his true career begins.



An Alluvial Digging on the Vaal.



The Joys of Coaching to the Diamondfields.



Diamond Diggers at Delport's Hope, Vaal River.

CHAPTER II.

THE RIVER DIGGINGS

In spite of the interruptions when he was away on commando, Robinson's wool-merchant's business had prospered. He now owned several farms in the Free State, bought with the proceeds, where his representatives were breeding sheep and horses. But for his own part, he continued the business of buying wool. On the long journeys it necessitated he would often spend a night at one or other of the farm houses on his route, where in conversation with the family, he would learn all the news that happened to be current in that part of the world. So it happened that he heard how a trader had bought a pebble from a farmer in the North-Western district, how that pebble had ultimately reached the hands of Dr. Atherstone, of Grahamstown, and how it had been declared to be a diamond.

This discovery had naturally aroused great interest among the farmers, which increased when other stones were found, but it led at first to no result. The view of the experts was that the stones were part of the droppings of ostriches, but where they had originally come from nobody could tell. Still, many people, and Robinson among them, were now on the look-out for diamonds.

In July of 1868, he set out on one of his long journeys, this time in a Cape cart with four horses, with a Malay driver, who also acted as cook, and a native groom. At the banks of a small river the coachman pulled up, and got down to examine the ground.

"What is the matter, Ou Taa?" said Robinson.

"There is nothing the matter," the driver said. "I want to look at the drift to see that the road is all right."

"Wait," said Robinson, "I will go with you."

Both got out and walked up to the drift. Finding the road safe the Malay went back to bring up the cart, while Robinson walked down the bank of the river. In the dry bed of the stream, he noticed

thousands of little pebbles, of all colours and shapes. He was struck by the beauty of many of them, and wondered idly if there might be diamonds among them. Picking up a few, he put them in his pocket, and the cart drove on.

Presently they arrived at the little Cape Colony village which was their destination. Before they reached the hotel, Robinson noticed in the street, an old acquaintance of his, who had now retired from business and was living in the village. He stopped and greeted him. His friend asked if he had heard the latest news. On his replying that he had not, the friend told him that another diamond discovery had been made. He called later at Robinson's hotel and told him the particulars : how another stone had been found, how it too, had proved to be a diamond, and how it had been sold in Hopetown for more than eleven thousand pounds.

All that night Robinson lay awake in his room in the hotel thinking. The story of the diamond gripped his imagination, and as he tossed from side to side in his bed, in fancy he already saw himself the discoverer of the great diamond deposit that must exist somewhere, if only it could be found. Then his thought would take another turn, and he saw the misery and depression from which the Colony was suffering at the time alleviated at one stroke, as by a magic wand, by this discovery, with cities springing up in the wild and wealth pouring into the country's empty coffers, with himself the magician. Then again he would wonder how he should know a rough diamond if he found one, and would reflect that after all he had none of the knowledge supposed to be necessary to a prospector. Yet something urged him to make the attempt, however wild an enterprise it might seem, trusting not in his knowledge but in his star. Then he fell again to building castles in the air, picturing the wealth and glory that lay at his feet for the picking up. He was young then and the sparkling air of the upland winter was like wine in his lungs. As the dawn came, he knew that he must trust his star.

He rose, and dressed, and after coffee he called his servants, and told them to inspan and have the cart ready to set out again immediately after breakfast. The destination was to be the river where

the pebbles had been found. The Malay marvelled at the order to drive back the way they had come, but he obeyed. At first he began talking to the native in an undertone, expressing his astonishment at their master's determination to travel again the road by which they had just come on a journey of so many days. But the native heard him with indifference and did not reply ; it was nothing to him which way his master chose to go, nor what folly he chose to perpetrate, so long as his wages were paid and his rations adequate. So presently the murmuring ceased, and there was a silence in the cart, broken only from time to time by Robinson's voice, impatiently urging the coachman to drive faster.

So they drove on unspeaking, over the immense, silent plains. As the young man looked out over the desolate land to the far blue hills, and watched them take fantastic shapes on the horizon, his mind was full of visions. He saw again the pictures of the night and under the clear sun of morning they did not vanish, but took more substantial shapes. He would fall into a day dream, from which he would rouse himself to urge Ou Taa to drive faster, and yet faster. Then he would collect himself again, and pass in review all the knowledge that he had about diamonds. How was he to know a rough diamond when he found one ? That was the question now.

He remembered the common test, that a diamond would cut glass. He remembered that he had been told that the stone was an octahedron in shape, that it had a glossy appearance, and that there were several ways of testing it. But only one of these could he call to mind : this was to rub it against a glass in the dark, if during the friction, the stone threw off a phosphorescent light, then, he had been told, it was sure to be a diamond. And this was the full extent of his knowledge of the subject. But, even when he had reviewed all this in his mind, they seemed to be no nearer the river of the pebbles. Again he would urge the coachman to drive faster ; and still the hours passed with leaden feet.

Presently the Malay suggested a short cut. It would have saved some hours on the journey he supposed Robinson to be making, but it would take them right away from the river bed. The suggestion

was hastily declined, to his astonishment, and at length they came to the river of the pebbles.

Here they stopped, Robinson got out, and began to examine the dry bed of the stream. Carefully he studied the pebbles, which lay scattered in thousands on the ground. He picked out those of angular shape and bright appearance, which seemed to be transparent. Then he had to decide what to do next. There was no water near the spot, so it was impossible to camp there. But the nearest house was miles away, so if they were to reach it that night they must lose no time. He resolved to take as many stones as he could carry, and make for the nearest homestead. Accordingly, he filled the bag with the transparent angular pebbles, and put it in the cart. Then he took a last look round, picked up a few more pebbles, and put them in his pocket before he climbed again into the cart.

“Drive to the nearest house,” he told the coachman.

“The nearest house is a long journey,” said Ou Taa.

“Never mind,” said his master. “Drive there.”

On they went again, in silence, over hill and plain. Still the time dragged, and it seemed an age until, almost at nightfall, they reached a homestead. Here Robinson asked for a night's lodging, and the farmer, with the usual hospitality of the Boers, agreed. The horses were outspanned, and the bag of stones brought into the house and taken to the room where Robinson was to sleep.

After supper the family retired. As soon as he saw that the lights were out in the front room, Robinson carefully arranged his bagful of stones on the floor of his room, in such a way as to be able to distinguish them by touch in the dark. Then he wiped a tumbler quite dry, blew out the light, took up a stone, and rubbed it on the glass.

There was no result. He took up another stone, and repeated the process. Still nothing happened, and several more attempts

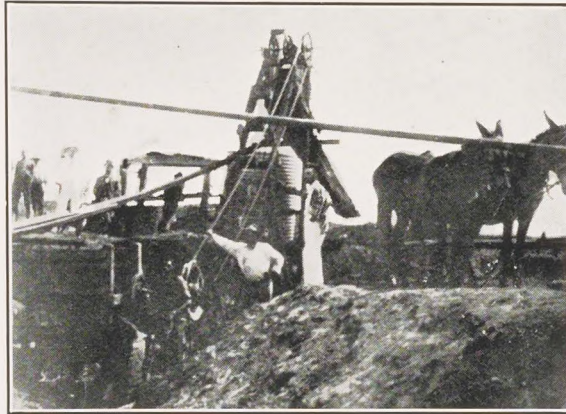
were equally unsuccessful. But he had hardly expected to find a diamond at the first attempt, and he went on without discouragement. When he had worked his way through half of the stones in the bag, he began, for the first time, to have doubts of the wisdom of his action. Yet he continued his tests. The result was the same in every case: nothing whatever occurred, and every stone was quite obviously a worthless pebble. Yet he continued, working doggedly on, till he had tested every stone in his bag, and proved that every one was worthless.

When there could be no further doubt about it, he flung himself on the bed, and lay there for an hour, sunk in a bitter reverie. Evidently his trust in his star had been nothing but a piece of youthful folly. What else could it have been? Why should he have supposed that it would be given to him to find the deposit, when there were many others in the field who had real knowledge of the task? Doubtless the discovery was reserved for them, and for his own part he had had no right to expect that the attempt would result in anything else than the failure it had proved. These were his thoughts; but the disappointment was bitter, nevertheless.

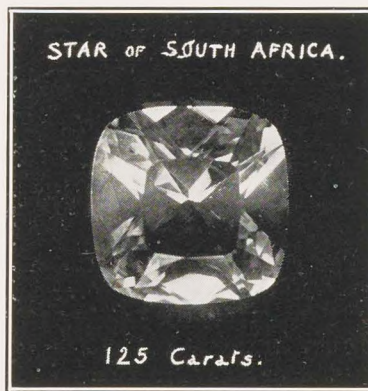
At last he decided that, to make quite certain, he might as well test the pebbles he had in his pocket. He started on these, with the same result. When he had tested five of them he began to weary of the task and to grow half-hearted in his rubbing, but he persevered in spite of the disillusion, and started on the sixth. It too, proved worthless. He picked up the seventh and rubbed it half-heartedly on the long-suffering tumbler. He was startled at the noise it made: a deep grating sound, unlike anything that had come from the other pebbles.

With a dawning hope, Robinson lit the candle, and looked at the stone. His hope dwindled at once, for it was impossible to believe that so irregularly-shaped and dull-surfaced a stone could be a diamond. However, he might as well make the attempt, though it was difficult even to find a flat surface to rub against the glass. He wiped the tumbler quite dry, put the flattish point of the stone against it, blew out the light, and began to rub. Suddenly a streak of light

The River Diggings on the Vaal.



Mule driven gear on an Alluvial claim.



Alluvial Diamond Mining.

appeared—unexpected but unmistakable. He rubbed and rubbed again. The light was clear and distinct. He put the sharp side of the stone to the glass and drew it along. He felt it cutting deep into the glass. Now he was certain ; and forgetting where he was, and everything else, he shouted in his tremendous voice, “ I have got it.”

As he was dancing round the room, there was a knock at the door. He recollected himself at once, and opened to find the old farmer standing outside with a lighted candle, anxious to know what was the matter with his guest. Robinson explained that he had had a nightmare. “ I see you have,” said his host, “ for you are covered with sweat, and just now you cried out.” Robinson explained that he was not used to the rich food they had had for supper, but said that he now felt better and would sleep. As his host left him, they saw that the dawn was breaking.



The Pniel Diamond Diggings.

This was the beginning, but obviously prospecting for gems could not be carried on in this way. It was necessary to make a plan. He returned accordingly to his headquarters to make preparations, and presently set out again. This time he took two bullock wagons, loaded up with everything needful for a long expedition, and several native servants, and trekked up towards the Vaal River. On the way he traversed the desolate flats where Kimberley now stands. Had he but known it, the richest mine of all was under his feet as he travelled on. But this was not given him to know ; he shot a few springbok, and moved on, leaving the ground unexplored.

Robinson reached the Vaal River at a place named Hebron, where he outspanned. At that time the country there was to all intents and purposes No Man's Land ; there was considerable doubt as to

who was the nominal owner of it, and the only inhabitants were a few petty native clans and their missionaries. To the chief of one of these clans, Jan Bloem by name, Robinson was fortunate enough to do some small service, and in the conversation that followed the chief made some remarks which led Robinson to believe that he was right in his supposition that diamonds existed in the bed of the Vaal River. He persuaded the chief to cause his people to search the river bed, and at the same time he sent for his own natives—some sixty or seventy in number—from his farms, and set them to search likewise. It was not long before they began to find stones, and soon in increasing quantities. Meanwhile Robinson had secured the farms on the Free State side opposite Hebron, supposing that if diamonds were found on the Hebron side they would be found on the Free State side also. In this supposition he proved correct. His natives found numbers of gems on these properties ; and so the River Diggings came into being. Robinson was thus the first man to export diamonds to England from South Africa, and the Father of the present diamond industry. He sent Marcus, his partner, to England with the first diamonds encased in a belt which was Marcus's constant, even intimate, companion, and Marcus bore the marks of the heavy knobby belt for a long time afterwards.

Naturally enough, the news soon spread that Robinson had found in the Vaal River the great diamond deposit for which so many were looking, and others came flocking in their hundreds to the scene of his discovery. Stafford Parker was one of the first of these. Large settlements quickly sprang up ; there was one at Pniel, on the south bank of the river, another at Klipdrift, on the opposite bank. The latter, in less than two years from Robinson's discovery, already boasted brick buildings and shops, and even its own newspaper. The name of this place is now Barkly West.

The soil of the river bed was sifted by the diggers in rough cradles by hand. One of the most primitive forms of mining. It nevertheless yielded a rich harvest, and the diggers achieved a success so swift, dazzling and spectacular that thousands of prospectors were attracted to the spot. Ere long the mining population had risen to

ten thousand, exclusive of all the traders, camp-followers of different occupations, and hangers-on.

At first there had been little or no crime at the diggings. But it was not to be expected that so sudden a growth of population, and of so motley a character, could take place without some evil consequences. When it is remembered what the reputation of mining camps has always been (even though in South Africa it was not always deserved), and remembered likewise that the diggers, except those on the Free State, were not under the definite control of any recognised Government, it will be seen how great were the possibilities of mischief. Three Governments disputed between themselves the ownership of the diamond fields ; none of the three could establish any effective control as long as the dispute lasted ; and the only person who had anything approaching a clear title was the half-bred captain of an independent Griqua clan. The consequences of the situation were what might have been expected. Lawlessness ran riot, frequent disturbances took place. A little later, the diamond fields declared themselves a Republic on their own account and elected Stafford Parker as the President of a day ; but this was not yet.

To cope with the situation, the Free State Government appointed Robinson a Justice of the Peace, to put down the rioting in the Free State Territory. The territorial limits of his authority were uncertain, for no one knew exactly where the Free State ended. But there was no question as to the vigour of his proceedings in defence of the law.

Robinson's claims were situated on the farm Adamantia, later the property of the River View Diamond Syndicate. The farm had formerly been part of the enormous farm called Rietputs, the holding of Mr. Schalk Vorster, who was the first settler in that region. The ground held by Robinson was called Robinson's Kopje after him, and retains the name to this day. Until recently, a brick building was in existence, which used to be pointed out as the place where he resided. He was the first to build a permanent house on the diggings. His claims proved to be enormously wealthy, not only

in the number of stones, but in their size, for it is said that diamonds of a hundred carats were found there.

The territory about the diggings was, as has been said, part of No Man's Land, and there were several claimants to it. The diggers themselves were divided on the matter, though most of them desired to live under the British flag. Some supported the claims of the Free State, others desired to establish an independent republic, which might afterwards become part of the British Empire. One ingenious gentleman suggested that the name of the Republic should be *Terra Nemo*, and with the versatility of the true pioneer, he not only invented this name, but designed a flag and composed the words of a National Anthem for the embryo state. Nobody paid any attention to the claims of the Koranna chief, nor to those of the South African Republic—which was in those days the black sheep of the South African family. For the Free State, however, a much more friendly feeling was entertained.

Early in 1869, the Koranna chief, Jan Bloem, thought the time had come to assert his sovereign rights over the diggings, and he sent his field-cornet, Piet Quiman, with sixty members of the tribe, to order the diggers to cease work immediately. They refused, formed a Mutual Protection Association, with Roderick Barker as the Chairman (Captain he was called), and after he had armed the diggers with whatever weapons he could find, they told Quiman to leave the place immediately. He withdrew accordingly, but a few weeks later Bloem sent an ultimatum threatening to drive the diggers forcibly out of the country if they did not obey his orders. The ultimatum was received with contempt, but a laager was formed and preparations made for resistance. Jan Bloem duly arrived with his hordes, but after a careful reconnaissance, he judged discretion the better part of valour and departed, never to return.

At this time the number of diggers was still very small, probably not more than forty. But it grew rapidly, rising ere long into thousands. After Jan Bloem had left the scene, the next move was with the Free State Government, which sent two officials, who announced their intention of reading a proclamation claiming juris-

diction over the whole of the diggings. A part of the diggings were admittedly in Free State territory, so that no objection had been raised to the appointment of Robinson as a Justice of the Peace by the Free State authorities. But their claim to the whole could not be allowed ; it was greeted with derision, and the two officials left after threatening to send a commando. This commando duly appeared, but was greeted with so much friendly chaff and so many free drinks that it retired. The President then abandoned direct methods for a course of diplomatic correspondence with the British Authorities.

Finally the Transvaal took a hand in the game. The President himself, Martinus Wessels Pretorius, with about thirty burghers, appeared in person to announce that the South African Republic owned the country, and that he had been instructed by his Volksraad to read a proclamation on the spot and hoist the Vierkleur. Barker at once replied that if the flag were hoisted he would pull it down. Pretorius appealed for calm, and declared that in three days he would return and hoist the flag. He duly appeared, and with him a burgher bearing the name of Evans and Hugh Gwynne Owen, who was to be the magistrate of Klipdrift. Barker ordered his bugler to sound the advance, and the diggers charged, halting just in front of the burghers. Evans now produced the flag, and it was immediately torn from his hands. Shots were fired, but Barker ordered his men to cease fire.

Pretorius now withdrew to Hebron with his men. Owen, who refused to leave, was put across the river by force. From Hebron Pretorius opened further negotiations. But before they could be concluded, the Boers arrested a man named Gilman, and President Stafford Parker headed a commando which was now sent to inquire into the arrest. But the Boers did not wait for its arrival, for on seeing a cloud of dust moving down the road from the direction of Klipdrift, the Boer commandant at once ordered his men to saddle up and return home. Had he not been so hasty, he could have captured the whole commando, every member of which was rolling drunk. And this was the end of the dispute.

In the intervals of these proceedings, the normal life of the diggings went on in its hectic way. Government was provided by

the Diggers Executive Committee, the functions of which were both administrative and judicial. Rules were drawn up for the conduct of the citizens, and the committee tried all offences against these rules. Robinson was a member of this committee, prominent in both branches of its activities. There being no gaol, nor any other of the conveniences of civilisation, on the diggings, the committee had to devise its own forms of punishment, and did so with considerable ingenuity. It was, for instance, no uncommon sight to see a man being led through the camp by an escort, bearing on his back a huge placard with the word THIEF in large letters upon it. The result of such punishments was that the faces of habitual offenders became familiar to all the diggers, and such men found it impossible to remain in the camp. The little republic even had its law of treason, which prescribed that traitors should be put across the river.

The members of the Diggers' Committee besides Robinson himself, were Dr. Robertson of Fauresmith (Chairman), Messrs. Jolie, Beeton, White, McArthur, McIntosh, Prince, Barker, Tennant, Le Roy, and at one time R. W. Murray. Besides the temporary troubles with the Republics, the Committee had to deal with the growth of factions among the diggers themselves, which, from the passionate nature of such communities, became a serious evil, reaching in 1870 a height that threatened actual bloodshed. Free fights were not uncommon—and Robinson was usually to be found in the thick of them, for in his youth he loved a "scrap" as well as any man—but they were carried on in the British tradition, with the weapons of nature. Only, in a camp where all were armed, there was a serious danger that the diggers of the rival factions might come to something more dangerous than fisticuffs.

On this point we may quote from the article in the Kimberley Press to which we refer later: "In 1870 he (Mr. J. B. Robinson) intervened as moderator between the rival factions that convulsed Klipdrift. He was himself then a member of the Diggers' Executive and by his judicious conduct preserved the balance of parties, and won the greatest admiration by his manly bearing, and evident desire to protect the diggers' interests."

CHAPTER III.

THE BEGINNINGS OF KIMBERLEY

In 1869 and 1870 wandering diggers from the river at times tried their luck at Du Toit's Pan and Bultfontein, and were sometimes rewarded by the finding of small stones. But at a depth of only two feet, limestone was encountered, and the searchers then usually ceased their operations. Early in 1871, however, they penetrated deeper into the underlying ground, and stones began to be found in increasing quantities, till the encouraging results led to closer investigation, and about the middle of the year the great De Beers mine, the Bultfontein and Du Toit's Pan mines, and the Colesberg Kopje (afterwards the great Kimberley Mine) were discovered.

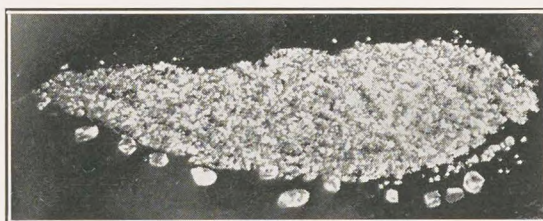
Many diggers now left the river for the Dry Diggings, as they were called, and Robinson was among the first of these. He secured rich claims on the Colesberg Kopje, and also established himself as a diamond buyer on a large scale. He was in fact the first to export diamonds from South Africa direct to the European markets, and it was in connection with this business that he paid his first visit to England in the early seventies. Associated with him in the business of diamond-dealing was the late Mr. Maurice Marcus—who thus laid the foundations of his own fortune, which at the time of his death a few years ago, was assessed at three millions. Robinson's office at Kimberley, at the corner of Old Main Street and Eden Street, was the first building of brick and mortar to be erected on the Diamond Fields. It is still standing intact. Sharing the same building with him were Thomas Lynch, who was afterwards created a knight of St. Gregory by His Holiness the Pope, and Charlie Slater, who was brother-in-law to the well-known Count Wilmot. The Chevalier Lynch was the promoter of the Kimberley Waterworks Company, and also the originator of the great scheme of amalgamating the whole of the claims in the Kimberley Mine. Both Lynch and Slater were intimate friends of Robinson.

The question of the ownership of the Diamond Fields was still unsettled. At the beginning of 1871, Sir Henry Barkly, the newly

How Kimberley Started.



Scene of the First Discovery.



A day's Wash-up.



The Great Diamond Crater of the Kimberley Mine — now abandoned.

appointed High Commissioner, paid a visit to the Fields, and afterwards visited Bloemfontein, where he opened negotiations with President Brand on the matter. In the course of the discussions, he became aware of the strong feeling which existed in the Free State, and resolved to ascertain the real value of the Fields before proceeding further. Robinson, as the most prominent man among the diggers, was invited to visit Bloemfontein and give Sir Henry Barkly his views on the matter. He declared that the value of the Fields was incalculable, and urged that a strong effort should be made to retain the ownership of them in British hands. Armed with this assurance, the High Commissioner pressed his claim, and finally triumphed.

The broad outlines of the dispute are well known. The Griqua chief, Nicholas Waterboer, claimed sovereignty over the territory in dispute, and declared himself willing to cede his rights to Great Britain in return for an annuity. Parts of this region were also claimed by the South African Republic. After much fruitless discussion, the matter was settled by arbitration, the final award—the special arbitrators having proved unable to agree—being made in accordance with the arrangement come to between the various parties, by Lieut.-Governor Keate, of Natal. The Keate Award was unfavourable to the Republics in an extreme degree, and is now commonly held to have been an unjust one, but it is only fair to say that upon the evidence submitted to him, no other verdict was possible. If the Republics failed to present their case adequately, they had only themselves to blame when judgment went against them.

In October, 1871, Nicholas Waterboer's territory was annexed by Great Britain, under the name of Griqualand West, and on the 1st November the Union Jack was hoisted on the Colesberg Kopje. The matter, however, was not yet settled, for five years later it was to be raised again. Meanwhile, a form of administration was devised for the newly annexed territory, which consisted of a triumvirate, whose members were Judge Barry, Judge Stockenstrom, and Richard William Murray, editor of the "Diamond News," the official organ of those times; their duties were to see that the

instructions issued by the High Commissioner were carried out. This system proved so unpopular that in September, 1872, it was abolished, and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Richard Southey was appointed Administrator. Shortly afterwards, his status was raised to that of Lieutenant-Governor, and Griqualand West became a Crown Colony. In 1872 a Bill providing for the annexation of Griqualand West to the Cape Colony was introduced in the Cape Parliament, but met with so much opposition that it was not proceeded with.

The farm on which the mines had been discovered bore the not very euphonious name of Vooruitzigt, and the growing settlement upon it was sometimes called by that name and sometimes by the more expressive title of "New Rush." But Lord Kimberley, the then Colonial Secretary, objected strongly to the name Vooruitzigt, which, he declared, he could neither spell nor pronounce. The name "New Rush," too, he could not tolerate as the title of a city in Her Majesty's dominions. In deference to his wishes, it was decided to find a new name, and eventually it was resolved that New Rush should be called Kimberley, after the Colonial Secretary, and Klipdrift (to which he also objected) re-christened Barkly, after the High Commissioner.

The Government remained intensely unpopular with the diggers. The local journals, the "Diamond News" (the Government organ), the "Diamond Fields," and the "Independent," engaged in mutual recriminations with a vigour and gusto that inevitably reminds the modern searcher through their files of Mark Twain's "State of the Tennessee Press." Actions for libel and slander seem to have been of almost daily occurrence. The "Diamond News" necessarily supported the Government, while Robinson upheld the cause of the digging community. To support his views, he acquired the "Independent" from Mr. W. Ling, passing it on ultimately to Caspar H. Hartley.

The Government, as we have said, was unpopular with the diggers. But the word unpopularity conveys but a mild and shadowy idea of the true state of feeling, which displayed a ferocity and passion seldom seen in a British Colony. The grievances which gave rise

to this state of things were plentiful, but in reality only two of them were of any importance. These were the prevalence of Illicit Diamond Buying, and the granting of digging licences to natives. Natives, upon paying the usual fee for a claim licence, were entitled to become independent diggers, although the whites refused to have anything to do with them. As time went on, it was observed that these coloured diggers were much more successful in finding diamonds than were their white neighbours. The solution of the problem was simple and obvious: among the thousands of boys employed by the white claimholders they had plenty of friends and relations who could be depended upon to levy private toll upon their masters' property in the interests of the family. There were also a large number of doubtful characters who were known as "kopje-wallopers," who perambulated the mines, ever ready to purchase, at their own figure, all and sundry stones, licit or illicit, that came their way, and were always ready for further business, mostly of a questionable kind. Some of these afterwards became wealthy, reformed their ways, and died in the odour of sanctity.

As long as the existing laws were in force, it was evident to the diggers that no stamping-out of crime could be hoped for. This was their chief objection to the Government, an objection raised to the pitch of fury by the continual losses to which they were exposed, and which were often of a ruinous kind. So severely did they suffer from the operations of diamond thieves and their receivers that in later years it was openly proposed that any person found guilty of illicit dealings in diamonds should be branded in the face with a hot iron—and though the proposal, needless to say, was rejected, it met with some measure of public support. For the present, however, it was the Lieutenant-Governor and the quite unrepresentative Legislative Council who were responsible for the putting down of this crime, and their failure to do so led to a state of feeling that on one occasion broke out into open insurrection.

To show what was the condition of public feeling at this period, we reproduce a few of the savage cartoons of Kidger Tucker. Concerning these, we may give the following note, written by Mr. George

Turbulent Early days in Kimberley 1875.

POLITICAL CARICATURES OF THE PERIOD.



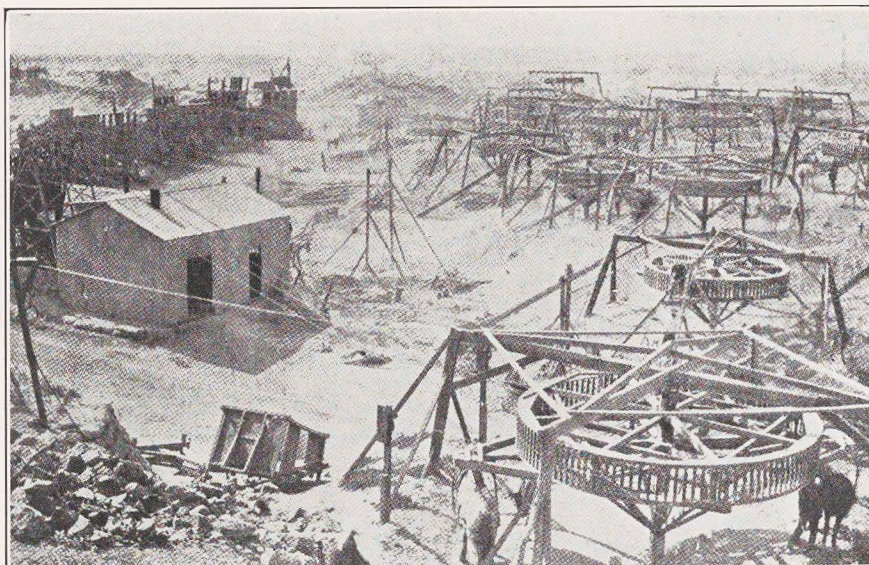
1. Mr. John Blades Currie in trouble.
2. Trying on the New Uniform.
3. Sir Richard Southey, Lieut.-Governor of Griqualand West.
4. Mr. Richard Wm. Murray, Editor of the "Diamond News," Kimberley.

Beet, of Kimberley, himself one of the oldest living pioneers of the Diamond Fields.

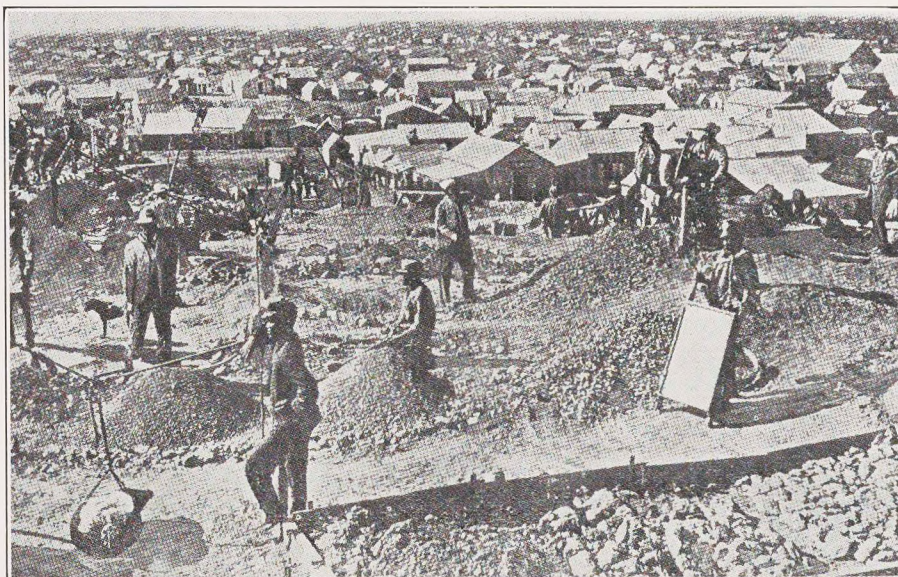
“ The accompanying selection of political cartoons was the work of the late Kidger Tucker, father of Senator William Tucker, C.M.G., and brother of the late Henry Tucker, who was for many years editor of the “ Diamond Fields Advertiser.” The artist was himself a digger, and latterly became secretary of the Kimberley Central Diamond Mining Company, the principal concern in the early days of the Colesberg Kopje (New Rush) diamond mine. The cleverness, strength, grimness and humour of his artistic work were at once recognised by friend and foe alike during the rough and tumble of political dissension on the Diamond Fields in the middle seventies, and such was the vigour and vitriolic pointedness of many of his pictorial satires, that it is difficult at this late day to understand why he was not hunted down and arraigned for high treason. All the foibles and mannerisms of his contemporaries in high places were relentlessly heightened and exposed in these anonymous sketches, and as each new effort was surreptitiously posted up on the walls of some popular canteen, the exhibit was hailed with unbounded acclamation or equally unbounded detestation by the whole populace.

“ These clever caricatures are now greatly valued, for they immortalize or damn unequivocally the personages who took a prominent part in the public life of Griqualand West in the early days. It is doubtful whether any artist on the staff of ‘ Punch ’ itself, past or present, could wield the crayon with more telling effect than could Kidger Tucker amid the hubbub of political elections, when the democratically minded digger was implored by his leader not only to “ vote early and vote often,” but also to drink early and often, and when even long dead voters were resurrected and made to vote two or sometimes three times at different polling booths ! Verily, as the “ old hand ” would exclaim : “ Them was the days ! ”

The Government, however, was doing its best to cope with an impossible situation. Many measures were taken which might have been welcomed by the diggers with more enthusiasm had they not



Horse whim washing machines at Kimberley in 1872.



Debris washing on the outskirts of Kimberley in 1880.

left the real grievances untouched. In 1874 Sir Richard Southey established a Mining Board for the better management of the industry, its members to be elected from and by the diggers. Robinson was one of the earliest members of this body, and became its Chairman.

The meetings of the Mining Board were sometimes very lively and even sensational. One instance is perhaps worth recording. During the course of a meeting a member named Hans Olsen, a Norwegian deep-sea sailor of the old type—breezy in speech and boisterous in manner—was speaking, when a Scotsman named Adkins, a member of the well-known digging firm of Baring-Gould and Adkins, interjected an offensive remark. Olsen at once laid hold of the ink pot before him and flung it at the offender's head, missing it by inches, but bespattering the walls of the iron shanty so liberally with the ink that the huge stains remained visible for months afterwards. Narrators of the incident used to blame Robinson as the offender on that occasion, but he was entirely guiltless in the matter. Nevertheless, it shows the kind of legends that used to gather around him.

At length, in 1875, matters on the Fields reached a climax. The spark in the powder barrel was the arrest of one William Cowie, owing to the discovery of firearms and ammunition on his business premises. He was found guilty and sentenced to pay a fine of £50, or go to prison for three months. The court was crowded with diggers, and there was another large gathering outside it. All were armed, either with revolvers or rifles. Immediately after sentence was pronounced, revolvers were drawn, and the black flag was hoisted, by one Albany Paddon, on a great debris heap nicknamed "Mount Ararat." The inevitable Irishman, this time an ex-sergeant in the British Army, O'Brien by name, led the way with a patrol to the exit from the Court, to prevent Cowie from being carried off to gaol, and a vast crowd of armed diggers joined in the fray. As soon as the police escort emerged with the prisoner, a rush was made, but no shots were fired, and the police tried hard to push their way through the crowd. In the end they reached the main entrance of the gaol, but then the diggers declared that they would not allow Cowie to be

imprisoned even if blood should flow. A parley was arranged between Messrs. Ling and Tucker, who were prominent among the diggers, and the Hon. S. G. Shippard, the Attorney-General, at which a temporary settlement was arrived at. Meanwhile a detachment of Imperial troops had been sent for from Cape Town, and they arrived a month later—when they were greeted with hogsheads of beer and showers of oranges by the former rebels. A few days after their arrival, five of the ringleaders were arrested; they all pleaded guilty and were bound over. Five more were arrested a little later, pleaded not guilty, and were acquitted—a verdict directly against the evidence, and due to the fact that the jury were in complete sympathy with the rebels.

In all this, Robinson refused to take any part. He had been approached by the ringleaders of the rebels, for it was known that he was an uncompromising champion of the diggers, but he flatly refused to take up arms or to take part in any unconstitutional movement. Instead, he set about forming a moderate party, and succeeded in doing so. When the settlement was to be arrived at after the insurrection, he made strong representations to the Government on behalf of the diggers, and these representations, coming as they did from the recognised leader of the moderate party, carried much more weight than the wild assertions of the hotheads. In the next year a requisition to Mr. J. B. Robinson to allow himself to be nominated as a candidate for the Legislative Council, signed by more than a hundred and twenty persons, appeared in the local Press. From it we may borrow one sentence. "There are now, strictly speaking, no political parties, but as you were foremost in the endeavour to settle the unhappy disputes between the late Government and the people, we look with confidence to you as one well worthy of our suffrage at the forthcoming election."

An article in the same paper goes into greater detail. "In 1874 the Committee of Public Safety was formed by a number of men who requested that veteran politician, Henry Tucker, to assume its presidency. The mass meetings of the 15th and 29th June, 5th and 7th November, and 3rd March, 1875, called by this committee,

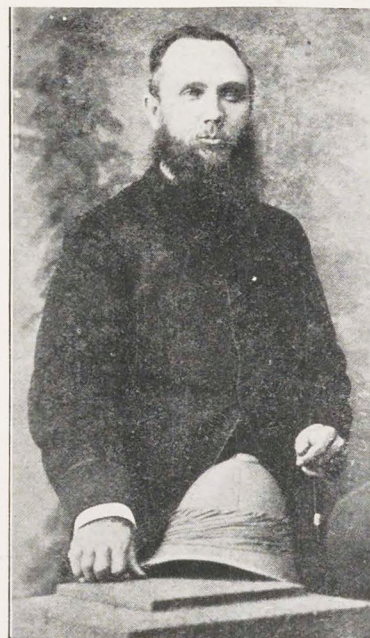
with the lengthened correspondence between Government and people, all led up to the crowning movement known as the Armed Association. When public spirit and excitement rose to the greatest height in May and June, after the ill-considered action of the Legislative Council, with the galling obstinacy of the ruling faction, and threatened us with all the horrors of civil war, Mr. J. B. Robinson stepped forward as peacemaker and moderator. His exertions bore fruit in the Capetown delegation, the suspension of hostilities, the peaceful passage of troops through our midst, and the visit of Sir Henry Barkly, which put an end to the schemes of the land swindlers, and resulted in the dissolution of the execrable and corrupt Council. To the wise spirit of moderation evoked by him is also traceable the mild and impartial course pursued by the State legal authorities in the conduct of the trials that marked the close of the Southey regime."

The article remarks later: "The address to Sir Henry Barkly on his defeat of the land swindlers, which completed the work of the moderate party, was Mr. Robinson's suggestion, and he devoted both time and money to the service of the people when both were required. Since then his most unremitting attention has been given to the suppression of diamond stealing."

Robinson's main plank in his platform was, of course, the amendment of the Mining Ordinance to make it possible to deal more effectively with illicit diamond dealing. Others were of purely local and temporary interest, but we might mention one statement he made on the question of relations with the Free State. The arrangement come to with the Free State on the boundary question had been stultified by the decision in a recent inquiry into a number of land titles, which had declared that Waterboer had never possessed any rights over the territory: from which it followed that Great Britain had had no right to annex it. President Brand went to England to put the case before the authorities, and was granted the sum of £90,000 as compensation to the Free State for the loss of the territory. There was a party among the diggers that favoured annexation to the Free State: not, it need hardly be



Lady Robinson as a girl at the age of 16 years.



Sir Joseph Robinson when member for Kimberley in the Cape House of Assembly 1882.



Sir Joseph Robinson at the age of 22.



Photo : Barnard.

Lady Robinson with her two eldest children at Kimberley.

said, from considerations of abstract justice, but because the native policy of the Free State was likely to be more friendly to the white diggers than that of Great Britain. But the vast majority of the diggers were intensely British in sentiment, and this party was therefore highly unpopular. Robinson, being known to be a moderate, was supposed to be a pro-Boer, and to desire the restoration of the fields to the Free State ; for it is a common belief in South Africa that a moderate is an unnecessary complication. When he was questioned on this point, he explicitly denied that he favoured the Free State party. But, he added, in view of the scheme of Confederation that had been mooted by Lord Carnarvon and advocated in South Africa, with more zeal than wisdom, by the historian J. A. Froude, that he believed that a policy of courtesy and conciliation towards the Republics was essential if Confederation were to be brought about. This was his constant view on the great question of the unification of South Africa : that only by conciliation could it be achieved, and therefore that conciliation was a duty.

In the end, he was defeated by a narrow majority by Tucker, an old and experienced politician—who, by the way, had the strange misfortune to be arrested under an I.D.B. law which he had himself helped to frame, and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. Robinson was again asked to stand, to fill the vacancy thus created, but this time he declined.

In August of 1876, a Volunteer Cavalry Corps was formed, of which Robinson was unanimously elected Captain. On the 4th October, 1877, he married a famous beauty, Elizabeth, eldest daughter of James Ferguson a well-known merchant of the Fields. The marriage was celebrated by Mr. R. H. K. d'Arcy, the magistrate of Kimberley, and the honeymoon was spent at Barkly.

CHAPTER IV.

MAYOR OF KIMBERLEY AND CANDIDATE FOR PARLIAMENT

Upon the Diamond Fields at that time was to be found a population as strangely mixed as any in the world. But in addition to the ordinary types to be found in all mining camps, and the collection of doubtful characters whose presence led John X. Merriman to describe the population, with more terseness than accuracy, as "peripatetic adventurers and wandering thieves," most of the men who were to make history in South Africa in the next twenty years were assembled there. A tragedy was to be enacted, and at Kimberley the performers gathered to learn the parts allotted them. Cecil Rhodes was there, a dreamy, awkward youth ; Dr. Jameson was making a reputation as a physician ; Barnie Barnato appeared from time to time on the boards of the local theatre ; Lionel Phillips was working as a superintendent in a block of Robinson's claims ; and Robinson himself, a tall figure with the keen blue eyes shaded by the now famous white helmet that he always wore, was often to be seen attending the early morning market before beginning the work of the day.

He prospered at Kimberley. His claims were rich, and he built up a very large business as a diamond-buyer, greatly helped in this by the fact that he was one of the few buyers to whom no breath of suspicion attached. Many were more or less scrupulous, but yielded from time to time to excessive temptation ; J. B. Robinson was one of the very few who were never suspected of the slightest connection with illicit diamond buying. When companies were floated, in the beginning of the eighties, most of his claims were formed into the Standard Diamond Mining Company, of which he was appointed Managing Director, in which capacity he remained until the Company became merged into the greater mining concern known as the De Beers Consolidated Mines, Ltd.

In 1877 a Bill providing for the annexation of Griqualand West to the Cape Colony was again introduced, and this time it was carried,

much to the annoyance of the people of the Diamond Fields, who were still strongly opposed to annexation. But it was not carried into effect as yet, and was in fact more in the nature of a threat than of an actual measure. Two years later Messrs. Sprigg (Prime Minister of the Cape Colony) and Upington (its Attorney General) paid a visit to Griqualand West, where they were received with politeness rather than enthusiasm. They took advantage of the opportunity to lay before the people the Colony's views of annexation, but contented themselves with simple statements and did not attempt any propaganda, which would only have been met with uncompromising hostility. But the visit, though it lessened their personal unpopularity did nothing to win over the diggers. After their departure, in October, 1879, a public meeting was held, at which a Constitutional Reform League was formed; of this body Robinson was elected President.

A petition to Sir Bartle Frere was drawn up at the same time. This petition set forth the reasons against annexation, and asked for the incorporation with the Province of Griqualand West of the country adjoining it to the north, as also of the territory included in the Keate Award (the native chiefs and residents of this territory having recently petitioned for annexation); for alterations and improvements in the Legislative constitution; and for larger and more adequate representation in the Legislative Council.

The petition was signed at Robinson's office by a large number of people, and the Constitutional Reform League gained a considerable following. It had all along been felt that the Legislative Council was insufficiently representative of diggers' interests, and it was believed that assimilation into the Cape Parliament would result in greater neglect than ever. The obvious solution was a reform of the Crown Colony constitution of the Province, and this Robinson and his followers set themselves to secure. But in the end their efforts proved vain, and in 1880 the Province was formally annexed to the Cape Colony; all the elected representatives in the Legislative Council voted against it, the official members for it, and the measure was passed by the casting vote of the Chairman.

A year before the annexation, Robinson was elected Mayor of Kimberley. Even here the perverse fate which so often seemed to pursue him and to bring out the latent determination of his character, was in evidence; for the tellers, for some obscure reason, decided not to count the votes of two of Robinson's supporters, and his friends had to go to law to get a decision that he was duly elected. Under his mayoralty great progress was made by the infant municipality, and some advance was registered in the now constant effort to improve the appalling conditions under which great numbers of the people had lived during the early years of the diggings. A long-drawn dispute with the Chevalier Lynch over the proposed water scheme now came to a head, and it was under Robinson's mayoralty that the arrangement was finally come to which was to result in giving Kimberley the finest water supply of any town in South Africa. He presided also over the beginnings of the Kimberley Public Library.

A meeting was held in May, at which it was decided to establish a Public Library, and a Committee was appointed to work out a scheme. Robinson, as the Mayor, was elected a member of this Committee, other members of which were Cecil Rhodes and R. W. Murray and several others. It was at first decided to float a Public Library Company, and shares were issued, which were taken up by all the leading men in the town, the Mayor, of course, among them. But later it was recognised that this method was unsuited to the establishment of libraries, and the institution was reconstructed on more normal lines. All the shareholders, Robinson among them, abandoned their claims and their investments were altered into donations. With the money thus raised, it was possible to construct a separate building to house the Library, which has continued to flourish until the present day. Other donations were made from time to time, among which were several very generous amounts made by Mr. Robinson.

His tenure of office as Mayor was marked at the beginning by one unfortunate incident. The two previous Mayors had been appointed Justices of the Peace immediately upon their election, the appointment to hold good "during pleasure." But when

Robinson was elected, there was a short delay in making the appointment, and then it was offered to him only "during his tenure of office." He refused to be singled out in this invidious way, and he held that it was a slight, not merely upon himself, but upon the Council. He accordingly wrote a dignified letter to the Administrator, in which he declined the proffered honour.

The correspondence duly came up for consideration at a meeting of the Council, which unanimously approved his action, Councillor Lyons proposed that the letters should appear on the Minutes. There was general approval for this suggestion, until Councillor R. W. Murray gave his views.

Mr. Murray said he should like the matter to stand over for a week, not from a feeling of disapproval of the action of the Mayor. At the same time, he would say that he had always been against the Mayor. He did not want him to be Mayor, and he had fought against it, but experience had proved that they had a good Mayor, and if Mr. Robinson stood for the Mayor next year, he should vote for him. He most heartily supported the Mayor in this matter, but he hoped the matter would stand over for another week.

Councillor Foggitt then pertinently remarked that "if Mr. Murray would show them a reason why the matter should stand over for another week, then possibly the Council might be induced to do so."

"Why, to find the viper who was at the bottom of the matter," was Mr. Murray's reply.

"If there is a viper in it, let us try to catch him and crush him by all means," said Mr. Foggitt, and the discussion continued in the same strain, ending in the Council's assertion of its unanimous approval of the Mayor's action. Nothing more was heard of the viper.

Meanwhile Robinson was, of course, continuing his business activities, which had now reached the stage when companies were taking the place of individuals. The Standard Diamond Mining Company, Limited, was formed in April, 1880, with J. B. Robinson

as Chairman, and the Rose-Innes Diamond Mining Company, with a capital of £113,750, was floated in June of the same year, Robinson being Chairman of this Company also. Meanwhile a long dispute had been dragging on between the Du Toit's Pan claim-holders, who had appointed a committee with Robinson as Chairman to conduct their side of it, and the London and South African Exploration Company, and the Government of Griqualand West. Several public meetings were held, at which Robinson reported what progress had been made and made suggestions. Finally, he placed before one of these meetings a scheme of settlement, which was adopted, and a newspaper of the 27th July, 1880, was able to announce the news that "the long-pending settlement of the dispute between the claim-holders and the proprietors at the Pan has been settled. The offer of 2s. 6d. per claim for good government has been accepted by the Government, and the long and troublesome quarrel between the diggers and the London and South African Exploration Company may now be looked upon as finally closed. . . . The Committee, with Mr. J. B. Robinson as Chairman, appointed to carry out this matter, have worked indefatigably"—and so on in the same strain.

But whatever questions might be settled, whatever disputes brought to a conclusion, there still remained the eternal question of I.D.B., which the Government had shown itself powerless to stamp out. Here we may give a brief account of the incidence of the crime, for which we are again indebted to Mr. George Beet.

Unscrupulous white men, wishing to become rich by short cuts, had begun, in the very early days of diamond digging, to entice the native labourers to steal diamonds from their masters. Canteen-keepers and the proprietors of eating-houses and butcher shops were the principal offenders in those days, when there were no penal laws against such dealings except the "unwritten law." Hence the claim-holders had to protect themselves as best they could. Committees were formed by the diggers for mutual protection. Traps were laid, and when absolute proof of the guilt of any person was obtained, the diggers met, and after the evidence had been heard and deliberated upon, they marched in a body to the delin-

quent's canteen or shop, and set fire to the premises without more ado. From the butcher shop, the smell of roasted meat could be inhaled from some distance, and gave a scent that was not unpalatable to hungry diggers in close proximity. Bottles of liquor were smashed, casks of wine and beer were stove in, and brandy barrels were opened and the spirits were allowed to spill on the ground.

Eventually the tents also were fired. But even this failed, for the evildoers were soon at the old game again, and they used to sing an old song with the refrain: "They all do it!" There was a good deal of truth in this, but very few were ever brought to justice. When a more settled government was established, it failed quite as completely as did the rough and ready methods of the diggers to deal with the evil. When one of these thieves was convicted, great enthusiasm was displayed. For instance, when one Leonard Nathan was shown to have been guilty of systematically dealing in stolen diamonds, and was sentenced to three years imprisonment, there was loud applause in Court, and demonstrations of joy were held outside. The reason of these demonstrations is to be found in the extreme rarity of such convictions, together with the urgency of the question for those whose livelihood was continually threatened by the operations of these rogues. Some were convicted, and suffered the penalty of their crime, but by far the greater number escaped, and many of these, as has been said above, afterwards achieved wealth and respectability simultaneously, and became more or less respected citizens of another country. A particularly mean feature of their crime was that they were usually clever enough to escape taking risks themselves, but caused their native servants to do so instead, by trading on their ignorance and greed, so that many a native received a flogging that should have been laid upon his master's back.

When Griqualand West had become a part of the Cape Colony, it was necessary to hold elections for the choice of members to represent it in the Cape Parliament. The great I.D.B. question, though it was still at the back of everyone's mind, was for the time being overlaid by other matters. But its non-appearance in the records of the various election meetings and speeches was due, not so much

to any lack of importance, as to the general unanimity upon it, and it was taken for granted that whoever might be elected for the Griqualand West constituencies must use their best endeavours to get a satisfactory I.D.B. Act passed.

Among the candidates requisitioned to stand were Robinson and Rhodes, for different constituencies. Robinson's requisition was signed by Rhodes, Barnato and many others. A rumour having got about that he intended to resign his candidature, owing to the possibility that business reasons might necessitate a journey to Cape Town, which would make it impossible for him to be present at Kimberley on nomination day, Barney Barnato was approached and induced to stand. But in the meantime a deputation had waited upon Robinson, composed of many of the most influential men in Kimberley, and strongly urged him to reconsider his decision. At the same time, it was obvious that considerable disappointment had been caused by his withdrawal, and the result of his hesitation was to bring out clearly the feeling in Kimberley that he was the right man to represent the diamond industry. He therefore fell in with the request of the deputation, and announced that he was prepared to stand. Barnato, hearing this, at once withdrew in Robinson's favour.

In reply to the requisition, issued in February, 1881, Robinson went fully into various matters of interest, touching upon the demand for increased representation, the railway question, the native question, the amendment of the Mining Ordinance, the question of a tax on diamonds, the salary of officials (which he declared should be increased by at least 25 per cent.), the question of Confederation (on which he announced himself a warm supporter of Lord Carnarvon's "grand and comprehensive scheme"), and demanded a Government grant for educational purposes. He also referred to the necessity of a bridge across the junction of the Modder and Riet Rivers, to the Licensing question, and to the necessity of vigorously prosecuting the Basuto War. This judicious medley of local and wider politics brought him the support of many electors as soon as it was published.

He went more fully into his programme at a public meeting held in the Theatre Royal on the 24th February, at which the Mayor of Kimberley, Mr. M. Cornwall, presided. After the usual compliments to his audience, he began by touching upon the railway question, urging that the inevitable extension to the Diamond Fields should be made by the eastern route, linking up Kimberley not with Cape Town, but with Port Elizabeth, though it could join the Cape line at Beaufort West. He then dealt with the native question as it existed at that time. A war was raging between the Cape Colony and the Basutos, and his comment on it is not without interest.

“With regard to the Basutos,” he said, “I think it will be within your recollection that in 1868 that nation waged war against the Free State which lasted five years. They were on the point of being exterminated when the Imperial Government stepped in and annexed Moshesh’s territory and made the Basutos British subjects. For some time the country remained a Crown Colony, after which it was taken over by the Cape, and there is no doubt that it was only after due consideration that the Ministry came to the conclusion that disarmament would be beneficial. (Cheers). Gentlemen, I took part in the war waged by the Basutos against the Free State, and remembering well their position at that time, I can assure you that they were on the point of being wiped out as a nation. But now that they have secured arms and are in a position to fight, the first thing they do to show their loyalty is to point their guns at those who served them. (Loud cheers). I am entirely at a loss to know for what purpose they require guns, but I know that on the least excitement their young bloods are only too ready to plunge into war, and for that, gentlemen, if for no other reason, I cannot but think the disarmament policy of the Ministry is a sound one. (Loud cheers).”

Going on to deal with the native labour question, he observed “It was in 1876 that native labour was very scarce on the fields and that a friend of mine was delighted at having been able to secure forty natives. They all arrived from the mission station, with the exception of one, who was a raw native, that is, he was uneducated.

They were sent into the mine, and the manner in which they worked filled him with delight. When he went among them first he found them singing the Hallelujah chorus. He returned in the afternoon and they were engaged with that fine and glorious old anthem "God save the Queen," and his joy knew no bounds. But on going back later he was told by the raw savage that the man who was leading them, their precentor, had concealed something in his belt. A search was then made, and on his person were found concealed two diamonds, one of five carats, and the other of ten. (Laughter). The five carat stone he had taken while chanting the Hallelujah chorus, and the ten carat he had appropriated while singing "God save the Queen." (Loud laughter and applause).

"Gentlemen, I do not say one word against missionaries, whom I shall always esteem. It is only necessary to bear in mind that they leave everything that is dear to them to come out to the wilds of Africa to educate the savage, and you cannot but admire them. But what I say is this, that the fruits of their labours are not all that they are sometimes represented to be. (Loud cheers).

"Gentlemen, if I have the honour to represent you in the Cape Parliament, I shall endeavour to get a large supply of native labour from the interior, and shall certainly impress upon the Government the necessity of organising a scheme. At present the natives have to walk 700 miles in order to get here; they are starved on the road, and it requires a great amount of courage on their part to attempt the journey."

He then went into detail upon various local questions, the interest of which has long since evaporated, and presently came to the question of increased representation. "I think it is about eighteen months ago," he said, "that Messrs. Sprigg and Upington paid a visit to this place, and a banquet was given in their honour. I was present, and I well remember Mr. Sprigg saying that it was not the intention of the Cape Government to annex this Province against the wishes of the people, and that the Government would never commit an unconstitutional act. I was rather surprised some six months after this to find the question of annexation bruited about, and I must

confess that I felt very bitter against the Cape Government. But subsequently I had an opportunity of perusing the despatches on the subject, and I maintain, gentlemen, that no one who read those despatches could help coming to the conclusion that Mr. Sprigg was an honourable man (hear, hear), for he certainly did his best in the last dispatch to impress upon the Imperial Government not to annex the country against the wishes of the people." (He then read a brief extract from an Imperial dispatch, not quoted in the report of the speech, and continued). "After receiving this dispatch, you will at once see the position of the Ministry. They were forced to annex the territory, and when a public meeting was called here, I would not take part in it, because I had read those despatches, and knew that annexation was inevitable, I said 'Let us meet, and pass resolutions, and impress upon the Colonial Government the importance and the necessity for increased representation.' Gentlemen, my suggestions were thrust aside. The meetings took place; resolutions were passed, and wired to England, and what was the result? Why, that we have but four members to represent us in the Cape Parliament, in place of the increased representation to which by our importance we are entitled (loud cheers). It was clearly indicated by the despatches of the Imperial Government that we were entitled to increased representation and if we had only agitated at the time, there is not the slightest doubt we should have obtained it." (Applause).

On the question of Confederation, he said "I think you will see from the instruction given to our new Governor that the Imperial Government thinks the colonies should make overtures to them on the subject. I am certainly of opinion, gentlemen, that the members sent to represent you should introduce this important question into the Cape Parliament, and endeavour to see it carried through as soon as possible."

He ended, "I thank you, gentlemen, for the patient hearing you have given me, and I do hope that my supporters will conduct this election in a temperate spirit. I have no ill-feeling towards the other candidates, and I sincerely trust they will show the same spirit

of fair play towards us. I remember a passage in one of Disraeli's novels, in which he describes the pangs of disappointment to which we are all more or less subject. He says it is bitter to lose one's hair, it is bitter to lose one's teeth, but it is most bitter to be defeated when trying to get into Parliament. But I can assure you, gentlemen, that this will not be my feeling, but that if I am destined to suffer defeat I will bear it bravely."

Loud cheers greeted this modest conclusion, and the candidate resumed his seat. A vote of confidence was passed unanimously, and the meeting broke up, after a vote of thanks to the Mayor as Chairman.

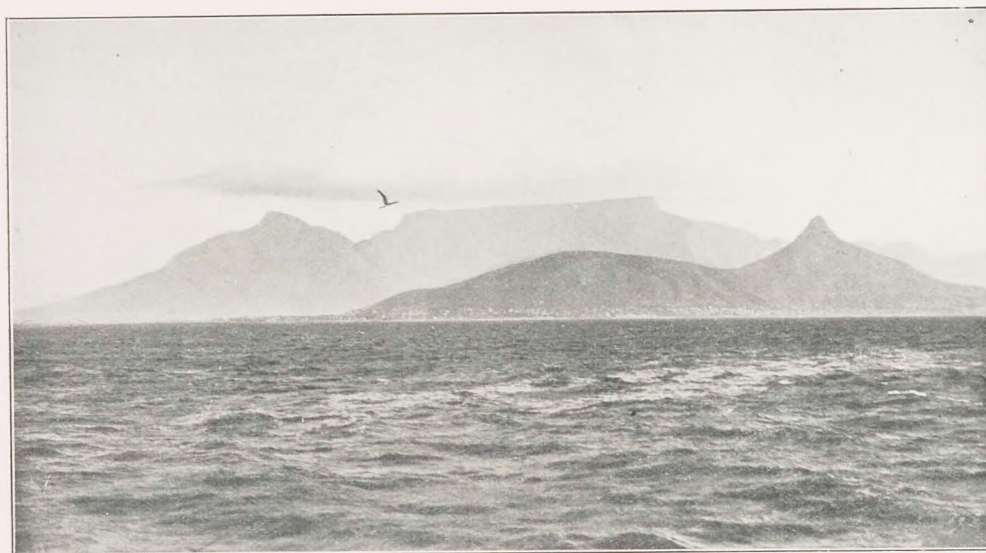
Robinson's native policy, as declared in this speech—a policy of discipline and impartial justice—had won for him the support of a large number of Kimberley electors. One of the three candidates, Dr. Matthews, opposed him on this point, but only succeeded in alienating many votes from himself. The third, who bore the prophetic name of Bottomley, had a certain following, but he was hardly of the same prominence as either of the other two.

The candidates were duly nominated on the 9th March. Their names were Bottomley, Richter, Robinson (proposed by the Mayor) and Dr. Matthews. The usual public meetings were held, canvassing proceeded merrily, and great excitement prevailed—which, however, was a good deal damped by the general gloom caused by the series of British reverses in the Transvaal. In the midst of the turmoil of the election, the Standard Diamond Mining Company, of which Robinson was Managing Director, caused some sensation by declaring a quarterly dividend of £6 per share, equivalent to 24 per cent. per annum.

The polling day was the 15th March, 1881, and the result was declared a few days later. The betting had been freely in Robinson's favour, and no surprise was caused when it was announced that he and Dr. Matthews were elected. Mr. Bottomley, who had engaged in mysterious operations designed to win over both the licensed victuallers and the Good Templars to his side, received a somewhat rude awakening.

Before the new members left for Cape Town, they attended the St. Patrick's Day banquet, at which their healths were proposed. Each responded in a short speech. Robinson spoke briefly, referring to his work in impressing upon the Administrators of the Province the mines were concerned. He added that at the time that he was first asked to stand as a member for the Cape House of Assembly he consented to do so, but shortly afterwards found that his business engagements would not allow him to go to Cape Town, and he then withdrew. From the pressure of friends, however, and notwithstanding the attacks of a hostile Press, in fact in spite of them, he had agreed to stand. That hostile press had said that he had withdrawn simply because he had no chance of being elected, and he was then determined to stand because he was one of those men who liked to surmount obstacles, and he was glad to say he had succeeded (hear, hear, and cheers). He then returned thanks in the usual way.

On the 7th April, 1881, Mr. J. B. Robinson, M.L.A., took his seat in the House of Assembly.

*Photo by Leo Weinthal.*

Capetown and Table Mountain from the sea.

CHAPTER V.

PARLIAMENT AND THE I.D.B. ACT

Robinson made his maiden speech in Parliament on the 22nd April, 1881. The occasion was a vote of censure on the Sprigg Government, proposed by Scanlen, the Member for Cradock, for its conduct of the Basuto War. Robinson warmly defended the policy of the Government in this matter, revealing himself a keen debater and a strong party man.

"The native question," he said, "is the bugbear of political parties in this Colony, and has been so for many years, and judging from the action of the Opposition, it will be so to the end of the chapter. In Griqualand West, when the Peace Preservation Act was first initiated by the Ministry, it was universally approved of, and regarded as a sound measure. If there is any portion of the Cape Colony which has suffered great injury from the enforcement of the measure, it is Griqualand West. The hon. senior member for Kimberley said the loss amounts to something like £40,000 per month, but any hon. member who is acquainted with that part of the Colony will know that that amount is considerably below the actual loss. He will know that Basutoland is the grain country, the part from which we derive a large amount of grain consumed there, he will know that it is the part from which we derive a large supply of native labour, and that since the rebellion commenced, the supply of both grain and labour has ceased. Yet in spite of the great loss which the Colony has sustained, there is an extraordinary feeling of unanimity that approves of the way in which the Peace Preservation Act has been enforced. The feeling there of the large majority of the people is that the Act should be put into force in its entirety, and the Basutos taught to acknowledge and respect the law of the country." (Cheers). He then digressed for a few minutes, to make a telling attack on the sponsors of the resolution.

Picking up his thread again, he said "Now I say that if there was one act on the part of the Colonial Secretary which I approve of

and which I consider was an act of magnanimity and grace, it was when he intimated to the Basutos that he was willing to accept ten guns to show that it was not his intention to act arbitrarily, and all he wanted then was that they should show submission to the laws of the country. This act has been commented on as an act of humiliation. The hon. member for Cradock said it was descending into the valley of humiliation.

“Before I had the honour of taking my seat here a motion was introduced into the House by the hon. member for Stellenbosch (Mr. Hofmeyr) conveying the thanks of the House to the Imperial Government for the magnanimous and gracious peace accorded to the Transvaal. I am not going to say anything about the Transvaal people now, but I am astounded at the resolution. I admired it for one thing, and that was its keen and cutting satire. It was amusing to hear the arguments adduced to show that the English Government had acted with magnanimity and grace. I could understand it if the British Government having annexed the Transvaal, and the people having remonstrated and sent deputation on deputation to England, had the Imperial Government then said ‘We see your argument is a just one; we give your country back to you,’ that would have been an act of magnanimity and grace, but not after thousands of lives have been lost and after millions of money have been spent to say ‘You can have it back.’ What did the British Government find? It found that it would cost millions of money to put the Cape War down, so the British lion dropped his tail, and shut his eyes, and opened his mouth, and said ‘There is justice in your case after all; now we see you are right; take back your country.’ If this is an act of magnanimity and grace on the part of Mr. Gladstone, I would like, as a matter of curiosity, to see him in the valley of humiliation.”

After remarking that he had personal knowledge that the Basutos possessed 25,000 guns and 100,000 lbs. of ammunition, he said “The hon. member for Cape Town (Mr. Solomon) said that for twenty-five years the Colony had had no war. Why? Because the natives had had no arms to go to war with. Wait till they are armed

as the Basutos are armed, and then we shall have a war in this country which it will take millions of money to put down.

“A good deal is said about the loyalty of the Basutos. It has been said they are so loyal, so true to us. What really puzzles me is why were these arguments not raised when the Fingoes were disarmed. (Hear, hear). They have been loyal for sixty to eighty years. They have stuck to the white men and fought shoulder to shoulder to them in their battles. Why do these hon. gentlemen of the Opposition now object to the disarmament of the Basutos when they shut their eyes to the fact that the Fingoes were disarmed? It shows political cowardice. Because the Fingoes submitted tamely they were perfectly satisfied, and if the Basutos had not resisted, they would also have been perfectly satisfied.”

He went on to deal with the history of the Basutos, and retailed his own experience of them in the war between them and the Free State, afterwards explaining from personal knowledge the difficulties of campaigning in Basutoland at that season of the year. He ended by declaring that he would vote against the resolution, and sat down amidst loud applause.

After making this maiden speech, one of the most successful ever heard in the Cape Parliament, Robinson took no further active part in the doings of the session, but merely devoted himself to learning the ropes and mastering the intricacies of his new position. Dr. Matthews had also made his maiden speech, a few days before Robinson's, with marked effect, and that of Cecil Rhodes quickly followed. It was at once evident that, few as were the representatives of the Diamond Fields, they were likely to make themselves felt in the political life of the somewhat stagnant and easy-going Parliament of those days. Few gibes were less justified than that of one of their opponents, who said of the Griqualand West members that “it took three of them to make a speech.”

Robinson returned to Kimberley at the end of the session, in June. He had already made his name in Kimberley and was beginning to add to his laurels in Cape Town, and the people of Kimberley felt that they had a right to be proud of their members.

The Life of Sir Joseph B. Robinson, Bart.
Pioneers of Kimberley.



Some of the old Kimberley Pioneers :—Front Row. Mr. Geo. Beet, Major Peakham, Mr. Harsant. Middle Row :—Major A. J. Wright, Mr. Dan Smith, Mr. Fland, Back Row :—Mr. Ben Haybittel, Mr. Vigé, Mr. Schouw.



Messrs. (1.) "Ginger," (2) J. Mendelsohn, (3) Tickton, (4) Dettelbach (5) B. Oppenheimer, (6) W. S. Else, (7) D. Foxcock, (8) E. E. Bernheim, (9) C. Van Beek, (10) G. Imroth, (11) O. Petersen, (12) J. Berlein, (13) J. W. Philip, (14) Henry Cohen, (15) P. Bovie, (16) H. Hirsche.

Before we go on to deal with his Parliamentary career, we might mention one incident with which he was connected. In the early days, when the city was still under canvas, a spot near the Transvaal Road (now called Stead Street) was selected as a suitable place for a burying ground. This cemetery was enclosed by a limestone wall, and fringed with aloes, and was beautified by the growing of trees and flowers. About the middle of the eighties, it was condemned as a burial place, and everything in connection with it was allowed to be neglected; it fell into decay, and became a disgrace to the community. Mrs. George Beet, whose parents and several of her children are buried there, was so incensed at this neglect that she induced her husband, the Vice-Chairman of the Diamond Fields Pioneers Association, to take the matter up and see that it was put in a proper state of repair. He represented its disgraceful state to the City Council and the Cape Parliament without effect. However he received *carte blanche* from the Government to do what he liked with regard to its renovation. He then formed a Ladies Association for the express purpose of putting it in order. It was estimated to cost £500, and of this sum Robinson, whose eldest daughter is buried there, gave £150.

While the renovation was taking place, the convicts who were employed on it picked up in the gravel diamonds to the value of several thousands. These had evidently formed part of a parcel of stones, the bag which must have contained them being found near by. They were claimed by De Beers Company, who generously gave the proceeds to the cemetery funds.

In the earlier days of the diamond fields, all the residents were markedly charitable, and Robinson among them. For the most part, this charity took the form of gifts to individuals in distress (to a large number of whom he gave substantial help, on condition that they should say nothing about it) or of finding them employment. There were also occasionally funds sponsored by the newspapers, for the relief of distress often in places far distant from the fields. We even find a fund opened for the relief of distressed Jews in Turkey during the Russo-Turkish war, to which all the Jewish firms sub-

scribed five guineas each, and all the Christians either two guineas (as Robinson did) or one guinea. In later times, though the people remained more or less charitable, there was something of a falling off in this regard. One reason was that money was not so easily come by as in the early days, and therefore not so easily parted with. But perhaps another was the custom pursued by certain magnates, of keeping a careful record of all their gifts to charitable and philanthropic causes, and ensuring that it received a full meed of publicity. This was inevitably to degrade charity into a form of advertisement, and its effects were none of the pleasantest. Robinson's own custom was different, for he hated publicity in such things, and could not bring himself to allow it in his own case. He therefore made his donations to various institutions—the Library, the Hospital, the cemetery fund—the various funds, and to great numbers of individuals, but usually accompanied them with a request that there should be no publicity.

To return to his Parliamentary life. There were three questions that were of particular interest to the Griqualand West representatives. These were the question of railway communication, the question of the Government purchase of the Vooruitzicht estate, and the perennial I.D.B. question. On each of these Robinson was prominent.

In the matter of the Vooruitzicht estate, on which the greater number of the diamond mines are situated, he had a special interest, for it was Mr. James Ferguson, his father-in-law, who headed the agitation in Kimberley for the measure. The measure of Government purchase had been agitated for a long time, and there had been a long, intricate and rather technical dispute extending over several years, and embracing the Pniel Estate also. Finally, Mr. Marquand was sent from Cape Town to examine the plans of the two estates and to go thoroughly into the whole question. He reported to the Government, and eventually the Kimberley members, with Robinson at their head, prevailed upon the Government to make the purchase. The Vooruitzicht Estate was accordingly bought by the Government of Cape Colony for the sum of one hundred thousand pounds, and the first of the questions which Robinson had set himself to settle was thus solved.

Upon the question of railway development he spoke frequently and with vigour. When the Diamond mines were first discovered, the only railway line in the Colony was that from Cape Town to Wellington, and the whole of the interior was without communications. An impetus was given to building by the discovery, but it was a long time before it produced any practical effect. The pioneers came to the diggings on foot or on horseback—the party from Grahamstown took thirty-five days to complete their trek to the fields—and for several years afterwards the only regular conveyance was the stage-coach which left Cape Town at regular intervals for the interior. During the seventies, there had been great agitation for the building of a railway—agitation in which Robinson was prominent—but difficulties had been caused by the intense rivalry between the Eastern and Western Provinces of the Cape Colony. Port Elizabeth, the Eastern port, was some two hundred miles nearer to the fields than was Cape Town, but Cape Town was, of course, at the least distance from Europe. Robinson, himself an Eastern Province man, supported the claims of Port Elizabeth when the matter was first raised. Eventually it was decided to build two, lines, having their junction at Beaufort West, and that the Cape line should be the first to be begun. Work upon it was quickly started, but when the Beaufort West Junction was reached, there was a slowing down of operations. The stage-coach was still running, now from Beaufort West to Kimberley, and the Kimberley members had to make a considerable part of their journey by it. In Parliament, Robinson never ceased to agitate for a speedy continuation of the line, and he continually drew attention to the slow progress of the work, till eventually his efforts bore fruit and the line was completed. He was a member of the Railway Commission appointed by Parliament to go into the question of the continuation of the line, and it was largely due to him that the plan was carried through so rapidly as proved to be the case. His work for Kimberley in this connection was generally recognised, even by those who were politically opposed to him.

There still remained the great question of I.D.B. Upon Robinson's suggestion, a move was made on the 15th June, 1881, to establish a

Diamond Mining Protection Society at Kimberley, and the society took form on the 1st August. Its members included about one hundred and fifty firms, companies, and individual claimholders in the four mines, with rates of guarantee ranging from thirty shillings per annum per claim for the Bultfontein mine, to five pounds for the Kimberley mine. This body set itself to make clear the flaws in the Ordinance of 1880, to agitate for an amendment of the law, and to make recommendations to the Government as to how the traffic in illicit diamonds could best be stamped out. A meeting was held on the 6th March, when several amendments to the Ordinance were suggested, and a long debate took place on the question of the suggested import and export tax on diamonds.

But the most important discussion of the matter in Kimberley was at a meeting of claimholders held on the 13th April. This meeting was addressed by Robinson, as Member for Kimberley, who said in the course of his remarks: "It is in the recollection of many here that in 1872 disturbances took place in connection with illicit diamond buying. The result was that lynch-law was introduced. We had houses burnt down, men were ill-treated, and natives thrashed. The Ordinance that was introduced by Southey was said to meet all the requirements of the case, but it was again amended in 1880. The matter was then discussed in the Legislative Council, and it was then decided that three gentlemen should be appointed to form a Court to take the evidence of any case brought before it of a prisoner accused of illicit diamond buying, and if found guilty to be punished accordingly." He then went on to deal at some length with the proceedings of that Special Court, to show that it had well discharged its functions. He also defended the trapping system. "Objections have been urged against the trapping system, but it is adopted in England in cases where suspicions of dishonesty exist. For instance, marked money is placed in a letter, and the letter passes through the hands of the suspected party, who has no right to open the letter and steal the coin. If he takes it he is punished. Is it not also a fact that traps are employed in England to discover those indulging in the sale of adulterated liquor? Men are sent there to buy liquor, and in all civilised countries the so-

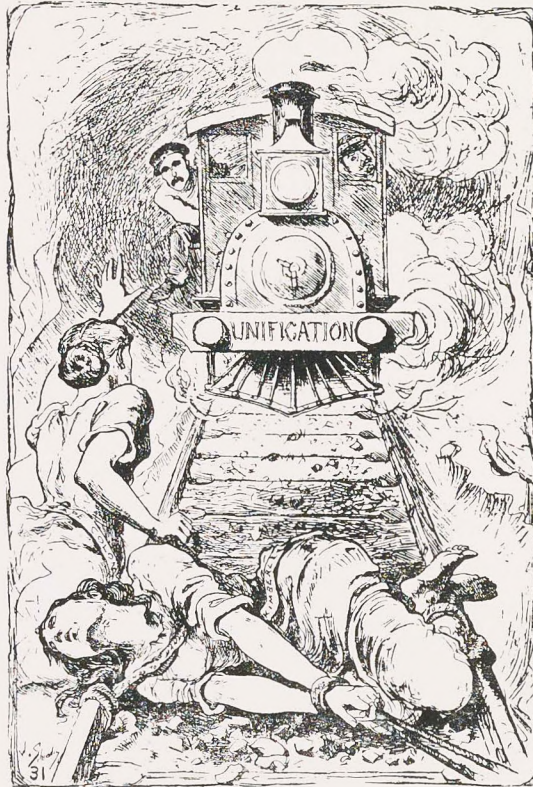
called trapping system is carried on. Unless you employ this system you might as well hand over your claims to the illicit themselves."

Later in his speech, he remarked: "Well, gentlemen, I would like to say something as to what transpired in the former days. I remember that I with some others organised a detective force which was very successful. Mr. McKenna was at the head of it. We 'ran in' a great many more illicit than has been done in a similar period since. I supplied the diamonds to the Government, and lost a good deal of money by it. I know how the illicit work. I know their ramifications. I know the bitter and hostile spirit they have towards me, and if they could manage it they would kill me politically, socially, and physically. I have no greater wish than to see them punished and serving their time afterwards.

"Unless you take a firm stand and show that you are determined to cope with this evil, your mines will be closed. The mining industry will be swept away altogether. Even now with the trapping system, some companies cannot pay dividends. Illicit will fatten on your labour and your capital. I am glad to see so many gentlemen present this afternoon, who, I hope, are determined to stand by their interests. I would like to say something about the searching system. We are resolved that illicit shall no longer walk along the streets with large stones in their pockets and snap their fingers in our faces while we are powerless to catch them."

Here he read the proposition drawn up by the Diamond Mining Protection Society for the amendment of that part of the Ordinance which related to searching. It suggested that the police should have the power of searching suspected persons without warrant, and that if any person was found in possession of rough diamonds without being able to produce a permit for them, he should be liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years, and to forfeit the diamonds. He then proposed a resolution of confidence in the Special Court, which was carried unanimously.

At the same meeting, Dr. Murphy proposed that "Our representative members be requested to pledge themselves to do their



WILL SHE SAVE HER?
The Unification of the Diamond Mines.



(From the "Cape Lantern," 1886.)
IN SANCTUARY.
Natal Sheltering the I.D.B's.

utmost to carry the Draft Bill proposed by the Diamond Mining Protection Society, and that all interference with the existing safeguards, such as the liquor Ordinance and other amendments, be strenuously opposed." This was also carried unanimously.

For the Draft Bill, Robinson himself had been largely responsible. In it he had incorporated various suggestions made by members of the Diamond Mining Protection Society and many lessons drawn from his own experience as a claimholder of long standing. The necessity for such a measure was not in doubt. The industry appeared to be on the verge of ruin, owing to the operations of the I.D.B.'s, who, by purchasing stolen diamonds at low prices and selling them below the market price, were able to make fortunes for themselves, but at the same time brought down the price of diamonds to such an extent that it was no longer payable to mine for them, and the only way to make diamonds pay was by stealing them. Hence the industry was finding it impossible to continue, the great dividends of a short time before were coming to a sudden end, and many shareholders in the Companies, and many of the smaller claimholders, were ruined. The crisis was quite as acute as the other crisis of over-production which followed it and which was surmounted by the amalgamation of the mines.

A Committee had been appointed by Parliament to go into the question. This Committee (of which Robinson and Rhodes were members), took evidence from various witnesses, and finally presented a Report much upon the lines of the draft Bill proposed by the Diamond Mining Protection Society. A feature of it was the extensive right of search, the necessity for anyone found in possession of uncut diamonds to prove his right to them, and several other measures, the stringency of which, necessary as it was, gave rise to some opposition among the inexperienced Members. Robinson made a point of calling personally upon every Member and explaining the provisions of the Bill and the necessity for them. Under his strenuous persistence, the opposition finally crumbled away. The Bill was sponsored in the House of Assembly by all the Kimberley members in vigorous speeches ; the opposition petered out ; and the Bill

passed the House and finally became law. It was quickly followed by a great exodus from Kimberley of many of the sharpers and thieves who had flourished like parasites upon the work of the diggers for nearly ten years past. They went, but they went breathing threatenings and slaughter against the men who had made it impossible for them to carry on their criminal career, and more particularly against Robinson. He had been the leader of the fight against I.D.B. for ten years and more, and thus had inevitably drawn upon himself the bitter hostility of the fraternity. The canteen-keeper, who now found himself forbidden to set up his Kaffir canteen in the proximity of a mine, and to do business in stolen stones with the native labourers under the cover of his trade, was bitter in his hostility, but not more bitter than was the respectable gentleman who was acquiring a competence by more secret ways and winning for himself a reputation as a philanthropist and warm supporter of all institutions for the public good and all measures for the improvement of mankind. The small fry were more willing than able to injure him ; it was these hypocrites who pursued him with relentless vindictiveness and remorseless enmity for years. As he had said at the meeting mentioned above, they all would wish they could kill him politically, socially and physically. Physically was too dangerous ; for these men were more accustomed to the weapons of underhand intrigue than to anything more open and more risky to themselves. But socially, perhaps, and still more politically, they might be able to injure him without risk to themselves ; and to this congenial task they now bent their energies. To raise a propaganda against him, to calumniate until some remnant of the stream of calumny might be induced to stick—this was now their task, pursued for many years with a zest which time could not diminish, and even at the present day is hardly ended. He knew that he would have to expect this, and shrugged his shoulders at it. He had determined for years past to stamp out the I.D.B. scandal, and now he had succeeded. For the rest, he cared nothing.

This achievement, for which it is generally admitted that the chief, if not the whole credit, belongs to Robinson, was to make the continuation of the diamond industry possible. The amalgamation

which came later, and which finally established the industry on a sound footing, was itself made possible only by Robinson's I.D.B. Act, without which there would no longer have been any industry to amalgamate.

In this amalgamation he did not take any very active or conspicuous part. It was Rhodes and Barnato who were the protagonists then, and Robinson was content to let them settle the matter. When he saw that it was inevitable, he agreed to join in the scheme. And with that we may turn from his career at Kimberley to the wider field which awaited him elsewhere.



The Late Mr. B. I. Barnato, M.L.A.

Northward Ho !



One of the famous Coaches with a team of twelve horses used by Gibson Bros. in the Passenger and Mail service from Kimberley to the Rand Goldfields in the pre-Railway period.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RAND DISCOVERED

It has been told how, after the discovery of the Kimberley mine, Robinson bought a claim and gave it to an old friend to work on half shares. After six months of this arrangement, the profits having amounted to a considerable sum, Robinson gave him the half to which this man was entitled, told him he might in future work the ground on his own account, and transferred to him all his own rights in the claim. This man, now sole owner, worked the claim for some time longer, and made some thousands of pounds from it. He then sold the claim and left Kimberley with a comfortable fortune to take up his residence in Pretoria. Here he acted as Robinson's agent, keeping an eye on mining developments in the Transvaal, and obtaining particulars of any prospect likely to interest his old friend. Gold had been found in the territory of the Republic, at Barberton, and though this discovery did not greatly interest Robinson, it suggested the wisdom of being prepared for eventualities.

One chilly winter's day in the July of 1886, Robinson was sitting in the Kimberley Club when a telegraph boy came up and handed him a wire. He opened it, saw that it was from his agent in Pretoria, and read :

"A discovery made about 30 miles from Pretoria of conglomerate shedding gold. Think it worth your while to come up and see it."

He acted on it at once. Although it was Saturday afternoon, and consequently a difficult time to make arrangements, he settled all his affairs, and took a ticket for Potchefstroom by Sunday morning's Barberton coach. First of all he had offered Mr. W. Alexander to go shares in the prospect, but Alexander, who regarded him as a rival, refused the offer. He too, booked by the next day's coach, and at the setting out the two found themselves together, bent on the same errand, and as the journey proceeded came to regard each other with steadily increasing dislike. Among the other passengers were Mr. W. Adler and Dr. Hans Sauer.

At Potchefstroom they had to alight, for the coach did not pass anywhere near the Witwatersrand. There was no attraction at that desolate spot at the back of beyond to divert the coach from its route to Barberton, where the gold mines were. Accordingly, they alighted here, and each made his own arrangements to continue the journey. While they were thus engaged, the down coach from Barberton arrived. It was full of passengers, all mining people bound from Barberton to Kimberley. They too, had heard of the Rand, and they laughed it to scorn. Here also Robinson met an old Australian digger, who had been to look at the Rand. His report was as pessimistic as could be. "The formation of the country will convince anyone that it is not gold-bearing," he said. "There are no reefs there. It is absurd—a mere wash, and nothing more."

Before leaving Kimberley, too, Robinson had met in the street a Mr. Kilgour, an engineer who had just arrived from the Transvaal.

Asked if he knew anything about the discovery, he answered: "Yes; it is nothing—merely an old river bed tilted up. It is not worth troubling about."

But Robinson still had faith in his star. Unperturbed, he completed his arrangements, and was the first to leave Potchefstroom, in a mule wagon he had hired, and in which he gave Dr. Sauer a seat. They drove for several days across the veld—as Robinson had so often driven in old days, with his wool and his produce—and presently arrived at the spot where Bantjes had made a cutting. Here the banket formation, afterwards found to be typical of the Witwatersrand formation, had been exposed, Robinson took a pick-axe, broke some pieces off the banket, and carried them to the nearest water in his helmet. Here they were crushed with a pestle and a mortar, and afterwards panned in a dish. The panning left a streak of gold extending nearly half way round the lower part of the dish. Further pannings gave the same result.

Satisfied with what he had seen at this place (which is now the Bantjes Gold Mine), Robinson lost no time, but set off at once for Langlaagte, where he arrived soon afterwards. This was a desolate

spot enough. Its name—in English, “long flats”—sufficiently reveals the featureless monotony of the scene. In the neighbourhood were a few poor farmhouses, in which the backveld Boers lived their meagre lives ; but at this time of year even these were deserted, for in winter the grass dried up so completely that the farmers had to trek with their herds to more kindly pastures. On the farm Langlaagte, which belonged to the widow Oosthuizen, was such a house, where the widow lived with her two sons. At this time one was with her, the other in the Bushveld with the stock. The three lived an arduous and frugal life, fighting hard to make ends meet, and never once guessing that the very house they lived in was built of gold. This is no exaggeration, but the sober truth ; for the homestead was built of stone, and the stone had been quarried, all unknowingly, from the gold reef itself.

At the back of this house Robinson outspanned, and set to work at once to find the reef. He struck an outcrop at once, and traced it without difficulty, finding that it ran right across the farm and beyond it. But the real question was whether the yield would continue at any depth. If, as the experts believed, the so-called reef was merely the bed of an old river, tilted up by some convulsion of nature, it would peter out at a short distance below the surface, and no surface richness would be of much avail. The only way to test this would be to sink a shaft : an expensive proceeding, and one rendered doubly difficult by the lack of labour. However, Robinson got hold of two men and began the attempt with their assistance.

Another difficulty was the question of food. The farmers, with all their livestock, were away on their winter trek, and there was no human being, and hardly a living creature, to be seen. In the homestead he did find indeed the widow and her son, but they had barely enough for their own needs. Robinson had to feed himself and his men. But on the bleak and windy uplands there was not a living soul in sight. When he had been there a week, however, he saw to his joy that an old wagon had arrived, and a tattered tent had been pitched on the ridge. He walked over, and

went on into the tent, where he found half the carcase of a sheep hanging up. This he bought for a sovereign from the owner, and bore it in triumph to his camp, where he quickly had it roasted and enjoyed such a feed as he had dreamed of for days past.

The widow Oosthuizen, some time before, had given an option on her farm for £400, a fair indication of its value as a farm. But the would-be purchaser had not been able to raise the money, and the option had lapsed. When Robinson arrived and traced the reef, he offered her £6,000, the terms being that he was to lease the farm for a year, with the option of purchase for the sum named at the end of the period. She accepted the offer, as well she might, for it represented untold wealth to her, and in due course Robinson became possessed of the property. Other fortune-seekers, who now began to arrive in considerable numbers, scratched their heads in puzzled wonder at Robinson's extravagance; some even thought of speaking seriously to him for his own good about it; but he paid no heed, only adopting for himself the defiant motto: "Here I remain."

Meanwhile he sank his first shaft, a small one only 25 feet deep, at an angle of 45 degrees. At that depth he found that the reef yielded the same amount of gold as on the surface. This, however, was not in itself enough to disprove the river-bed theory of the experts, and he now prepared to sink a proper full-sized shaft. The experts still jeered, and the late-comers took up surface propositions here and there. Attracted to the spot by the news that Robinson was finding gold, they still could hardly muster confidence like his own in his star, and they preferred to accept the views of the wiseacres. The Rothschilds' expert, fresh from England, rode across the field and departed; for he would not trouble to dismount, saying that it was obviously impossible that any gold could exist in such a formation. The old Buccaneer listened to all their views, and went on sinking his shaft.

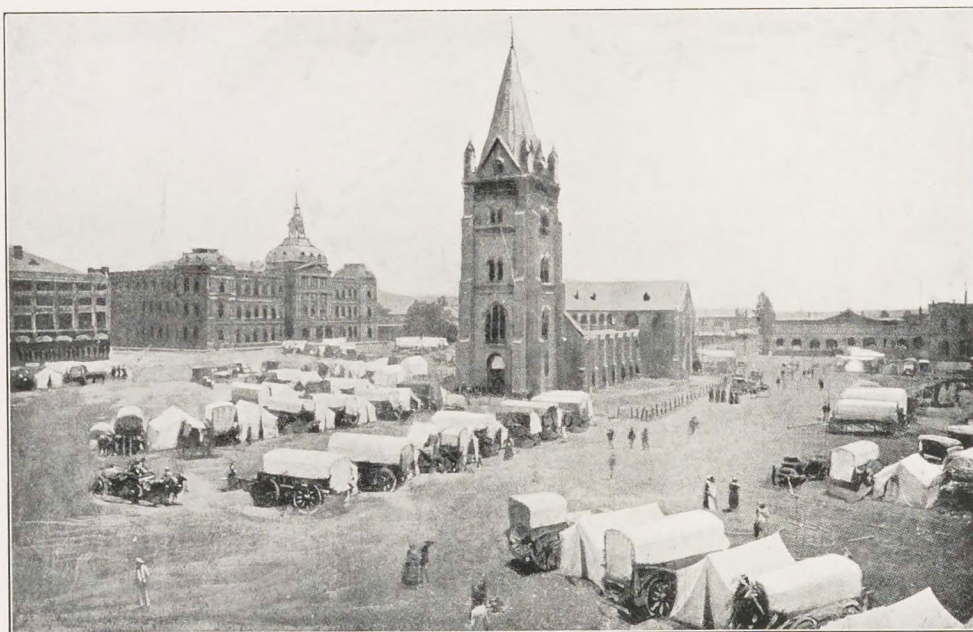
He bought up other properties in the neighbourhood, for he had travelled along the outcrop of the reef and seen that it extended over thirty miles, and he felt convinced, in spite of all opposition,

that where the length was so great there must be a considerable depth as well. It was this intuition of the depth of the reef that gave him his title to be the founder of the Witwatersrand ; without it, the Rand would have been a more pretentious Barberton. Trusting in this then, he proceeded, after his Langlaagte arrangements were completed, to buy a half share in the property belonging to Gert de Plessis and Japie de Villiers, for which he paid £1,000. This property is now part of the Robinson Gold Mine. Two months later he bought the remaining half of the property for £13,000. In all, he took up in this early period property to the value of £26,000, then more than half of his fortune.

In his delight at having secured, as he thought, so disproportionate a price for his land, de Villiers insisted on giving a champagne party to celebrate his luck. As the cream of the jest, Robinson himself was invited, and he duly attended. De Villiers and his friends, after much portentous winking to one another, solemnly drank to their guest's success. But the toast was too much for their gravity, and suddenly all burst into a simultaneous roar of laughter at Robinson's supposed simplicity. The old Buccaneer, who had a grim sense of humour, bore no malice, but a few years afterwards, when the property for which he had paid his extravagant £26,000, was capitalised at four millions sterling, and the shares stood at the market value of eighteen millions, he remembered the supper party and permitted himself to smile.

In consequence of the purchases he was making, Robinson came to be looked on as something like a madman. " Robinson's cabbage patches " became a standing joke on the fields ; he was solemnly told that, however suited his land might be to the growing of cabbages and however skilled in the art he might be himself, there was no hope of marketing the vegetables in the Transvaal. People came from all parts of the country to beg him to buy their worthless lands, for the word had gone round that Robinson would buy anything. More than once he had to lock himself up in his room in the European Hotel in Pretoria to keep out the crowds of importunate landowners eagerly offering their ground for sale.

“In Old Pretoria”



CHURCH SQUARE DURING NACHTMAAL, 1893.
A Wagon Camp around the Dutch Reformed Church (since removed) during a
Communion Service.

One day, at this time he was walking in Church Square, Pretoria, when a man whom he had helped in Kimberley came up to him and asked for a few words. "They are having a great deal of fun here at your expense," he went on, "because you are buying properties at Langlaagte which are only fit for cabbage plots on the supposition that they contain gold."

"Well," said Robinson, "suppose that is so."

"As you have been very kind to me," his acquaintance answered, "I don't like to see you fleeced in this way by a lot of ravenous sharks."

"Well, what is one to do?" Robinson asked. "The world is constituted on these lines. One section have brain power and enterprise which they use to the best of their discretion. There are other sections who, I am sorry to say, are drivelling idiots, and if they are amused at my action I don't see how it concerns them. If I lose money it is my loss, not theirs."

"How much have you invested already?" the other inquired.

"At the moment, twenty-six thousand," replied Robinson promptly. "But I have options on other properties which I shall no doubt acquire."

"Take my advice and sell," cried his acquaintance, horrified at the size of the sum mentioned.

"But how can I possibly realise when they all look upon me as rather queer and unbalanced? Who would relieve me of the properties?"

"Never mind," said the other. "Sell, even if you sell at a loss. Save as much as you can out of it."

"Well, I will think it over," said Robinson, and the conversation closed. Needless to say, he did not sell. On the contrary he was pleased at what he had just heard, because the more people disparaged his purchases, the more opportunities he had of buying

more properties cheaply, which was what he really desired to do. Besides the Langlaagte and the Robinson Mine, he wished to secure a single large block of properties upon the reef. The main reef had very soon been pegged along its whole length, and he would have to go far afield for the purpose. Two of his prospectors, who had been working on the Langlaagte were sent to make a thorough investigation of the Western Rand. They picked up the extension of the reef on the farm Randfontein, and at once the Robinson Syndicate was formed to purchase the farms Randfontein, Uitvalfontein, Middelvlei, Gemsbokfontein, Panvlakte Rietfontein, Waterval and Droogeheuvel. These euphoniously named properties which covered an area of forty thousand acres, in which the length of the outcrop was nearly ten miles, afterwards became the Randfontein Estates, Ltd., with a capital of two millions sterling. Robinson's principal holdings on the Rand were thus three in number: Langlaagte, the Robinson mine, and the Randfontein block. He was responsible for the discovery and development of these; and that is his second claim to the title of founder of the Rand.

Meanwhile he had been sinking the shaft on Langlaagte, the test on which the whole future of the goldfields depended. This, was a proper, full-sized shaft, the head of it a hundred yards from the outcrop. At that distance, he expected to strike the reef at 360 feet. So at least he had calculated, but if the experts were right, and the reef were only a river bed, then it was calculated that it would peter out at from thirty to seventy-five feet below the surface: this theory only the result could disprove.

As the shaft approached the depth that would settle the question, Robinson, for the first time began to feel some anxiety. One day he was in the house at Langlaagte when one of the workmen came running. They had struck, not the reef, but conglomerate, he said. They had panned it, and found that it was blank.

Here was evidence against Robinson's belief. But he remembered the bag of pebbles he had tested in old days for diamonds, and what the consequence of the test had been, and he went over to look at the shaft. He examined what they had found, and saw that it was

a narrow reef—"stringer" is the mining term—and that it carried no gold, as a glance at the pebbles sufficed to show. He told the men to continue, and went back to the house, certain that the true reef had not yet been reached. The men had now lost faith, and they sold their shares, but the work went on.

Ten days or so after this, Robinson was on the stoep of the house, when once again a man came running. This time the runner was wildly excited, and he was panting with mingled excitement and exertion as he cried: "We've struck the reef this morning! It's the true reef, and it's real jam!"

The trap stood at the door at the time, and Robinson at once drove over to see what they had found. When he arrived he asked



"Langlaagte Restante," Mr. Robinson's Home.
The first stone house to be erected on the Rand.

what had happened to the men who were working on the shaft, and who seemed to have vanished, and he was told they had all rushed off to buy back their shares. He panned some of the material brought up from the bottom of the shaft, and at once said that it was the real reef, and that it was rich in gold.

This shaft it was, the first ever sunk on the Rand, which proved the payability of the formation. Robinson's calm continuance in his belief, in spite of expert opinion and widespread derision, and his willingness to back it at great cost, had brought into being the greatest goldfields of the world. Once it became known that he had

found gold at depth, people swarmed from all directions on to the Witwatersrand. Soon the city of Johannesburg was laid out, stands were offered for sale, and found no lack of buyers. First came the mining capitalists from Kimberley, soon to be followed by others from overseas, then diggers, prospectors, speculators in real estate, tradesmen, the inevitable Israelite and his rival, the Greek, professional men, engineers, rich men, poor men, younger sons looking for a fortune, tramps looking for a meal—till it seemed to the burghers that the whole world was coming to Johannesburg. Even in far-off Grahamstown, a newspaper editor loaded his printing press on a wagon, and transferred his paper bodily to Johannesburg, eight hundred miles away. Still the tide came flooding in bearing the human swarms, the beggars and the capitalists, the farmer and the banker, the tinker and the tailor, to the golden Reef, and with them the flotsam and jetsam of civilisation, the ladies of pleasure, the sharpers and the thieves. Soon the city sprang up. Quickly wood and iron gave place to brick, here and there to plaster, sometimes even to stone. The bleak flats that had once stretched boundless and deserted to the horizon gave place to houses, shops, offices, and crowded streets. In the fullness of time, the chief city of South Africa stood upon the site. Such was the strange harvest that Robinson's "cabbage patches" bore. For the city of Johannesburg is the fruit of Robinson's endeavours more than those of any other man.



The first offices of the Standard Bank in Johannesburg, 1886.

CHAPTER VII.

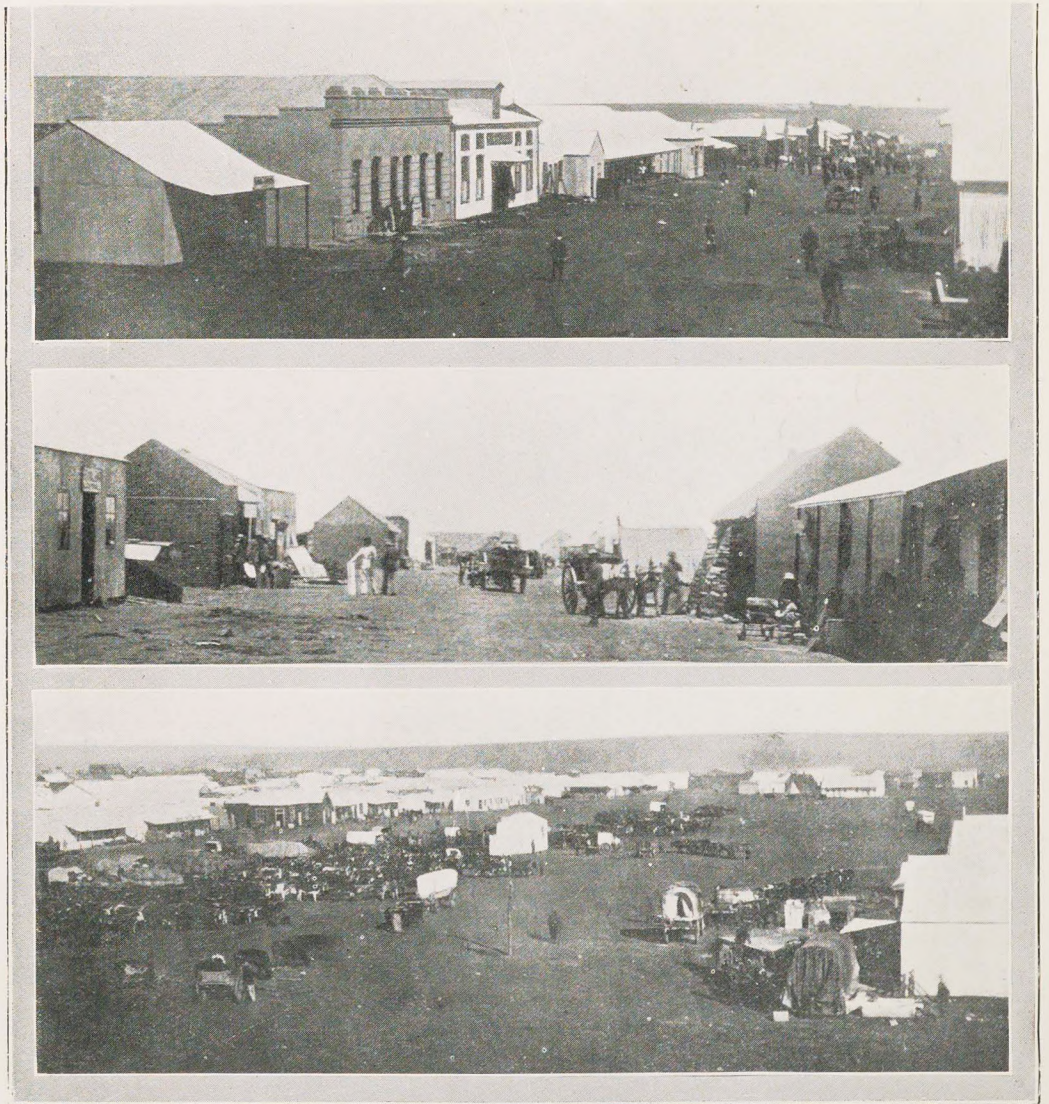
EARLY DAYS ON THE RAND

It will be remembered that Robinson had given a seat in his wagon from Potchefstroom to Dr. Sauer, who, of course, was working on behalf of Rhodes. When he had formed an opinion on the prospect, Sauer hastened back to Kimberley. Two or three weeks after Robinson's arrival, Rhodes, Rudd and Sauer made their appearance together, coming up from Kimberley in the Barberton coach, which, for the first time in its history, they persuaded to alter its course and drop them at the Rand. Here they began to look out for properties, the first they acquired being the Dupreez.

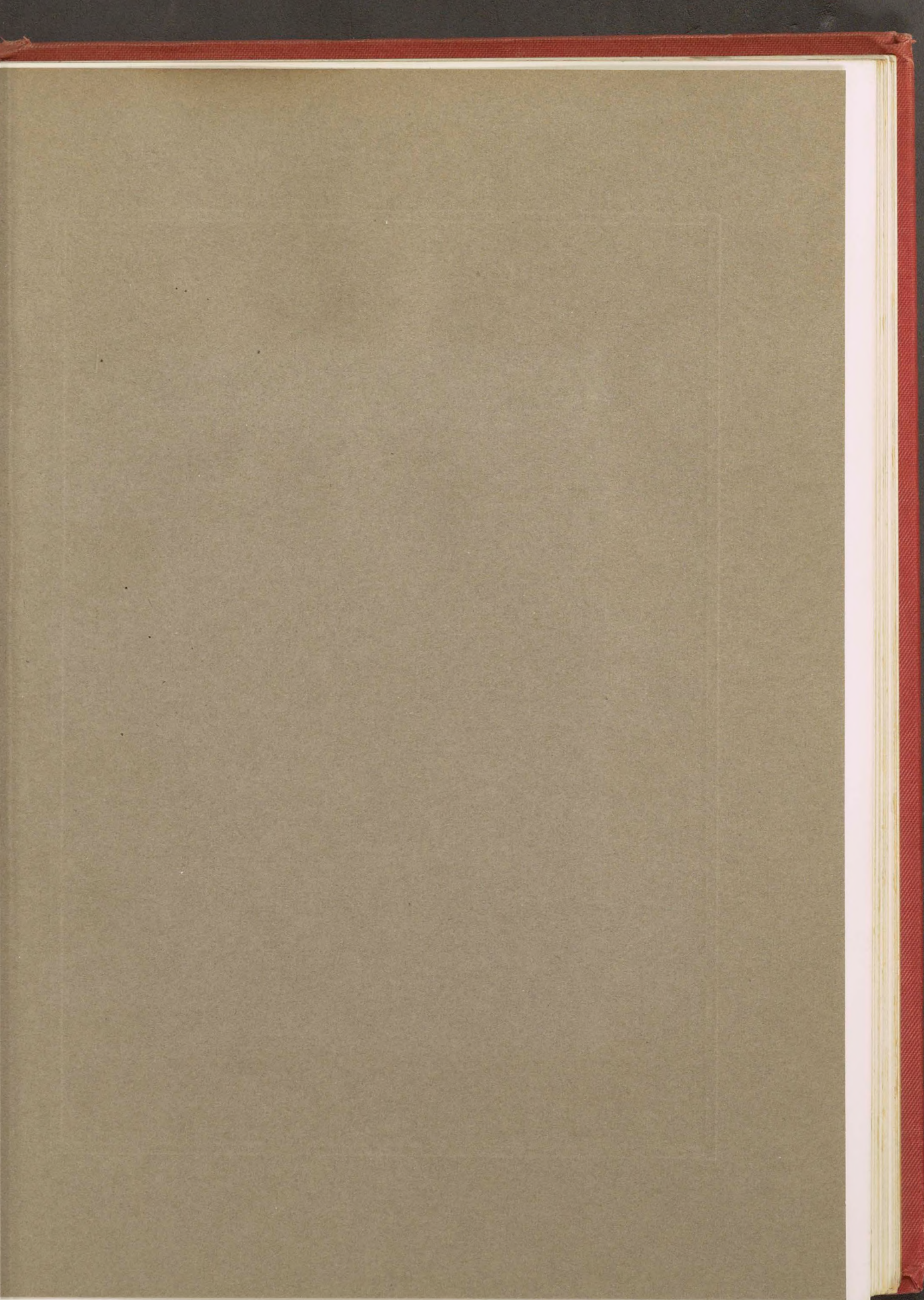
Rhodes, meeting Robinson in Pretoria, suggested that they should amalgamate their interests. Robinson's reply was that the interests Rhodes had acquired up to that time were not valuable enough to induce him to amalgamate. So the matter dropped, and each pursued his own separate speculations.

In October of 1886, a township was laid out, and named Johannesburg, after the second Christian name of the President, Stephanus Johannes Paulus Kruger. The land surveyor who laid out the township was one Johannes Rissik. When the survey was completed, there was held a public auction of the stands, at which the Minister of Mines, C. J. Joubert (brother of General Joubert), was present. The prices obtained for the stands were very low, for there was still little confidence in the permanence of the Reef, and astronomical profits were made by people who bought stands for a few shillings on this occasion, to sell them not long afterwards for thousands of pounds.

Once the payability of the Reef had been proved by Robinson's shaft, and mining operations had begun in earnest, it became necessary to come to an agreement with the Government. Frequent deputations were sent to Pretoria to interview the President. It was while heading one of these deputations that Robinson first met Kruger. Several



Johannesburg in 1887.





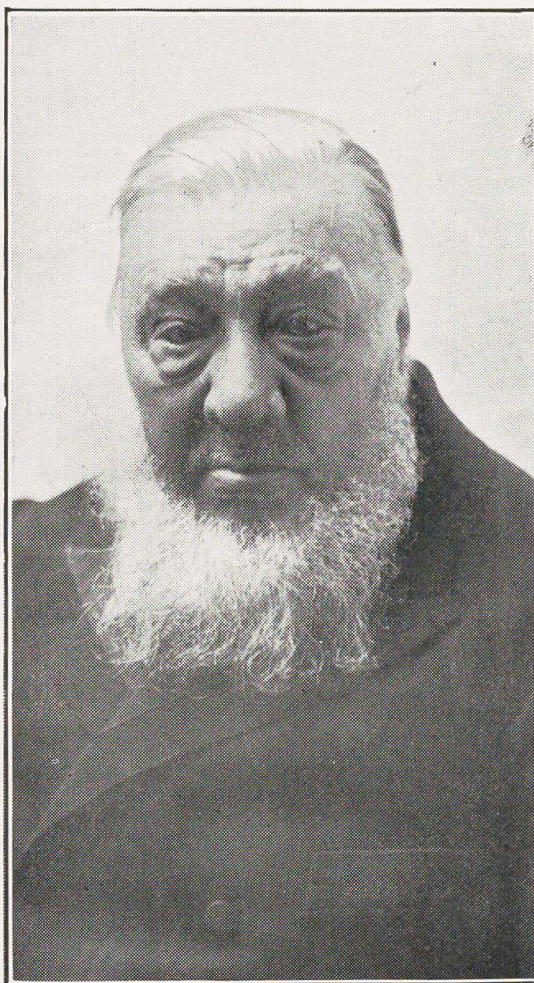
Sir Joseph Robinson at Dudley House, London in 1909.

public meetings, presided over by Robinson, were held in Pretoria, at which all matters relating to the newly discovered goldfields were discussed, and at these meetings deputations were appointed to interview the Government and to ascertain their intentions as to the mines.

Robinson, in the course of this work, had many meetings with Kruger, for whom he conceived a sincere respect. A South African by birth, possessing wide experience of the Boer character, and as much at home in Afrikaans as in English, he often had an advantage over his fellow members of deputations in being able to converse freely with the President. Of Kruger's own character, as of all who have played a part in the history of their countries, varying views have gained currency. To his intimates, he appeared simply as a man of extraordinarily lovable personality. To his enemies, he came to stand for a stubborn hostility to progress, and an obstinacy verging on pig-headedness. To his own people, he was the great patriot who fought to the last ditch for the independence of his country, and died broken-hearted when all was lost. Robinson liked him; had his own lot been cast in like manner, he would have put up just such a stubborn fight against odds as did the President. He understood the old man's nature, for it had in it a temper not unlike his own. Had the others understood so well, history would have been different.

One of these deputations to Oom Paul, headed by Robinson, included Rhodes and three others. Robinson took Rhodes aside and warned him to be careful how he spoke to Kruger, and above all to allow no hint of any dictatorial tone to creep into his voice. "It requires a good deal of tact to deal with him," he went on. "I have met him several times as Chairman of deputations, and I have found him a very shrewd man, but he is inclined to be obstinate, and very nasty if you attempt to run him the wrong way. But I believe that he means well and intends to deal fairly with all the interests of the Rand."

"I fully realise the position," Rhodes answered, and they went in. The President met them at the door, and walked in front of



His Honour the late S. J. P. Kruger, State President of the South African Republic, 1888—1900.

them to the extreme end of the large sitting room, where he seated himself in an easy chair, and curtly told the deputation to sit down. They did so. He then took out his tobacco bag, filled his pipe and lit it. Not a word had yet been said. Then he pushed back a little the brim of his black beaver hat, which he kept on his head throughout the interview, and leaning back in his chair, gazed steadfastly at the opposite wall. This was his favourite attitude when he felt that some difficult matter would arise in the discussion and that he would have to be on his guard.

Robinson rose, and said in Afrikaans, "Mr. President, we have been appointed to put before you these considerations," and went on to explain their errand. The other three members also spoke in Afrikaans, and very discreetly. When they had finished, it was evident that they had made some impression on the President. It was then the turn of Rhodes. Robinson rose to introduce him.

"Mr. President," he said, "allow me to introduce Mr. Rhodes, who now wishes to say something. He and I represented Kimberley in the Cape Parliament, and he is also a member of the Cape Ministry."

Kruger was not at all impressed. The only persons for whom he ever felt any respect were Queen Victoria and, curiously enough, the Governors of the British Colonies—this doubtless a survival of the feelings of his childhood, which had been spent in the Cape Colony. He said impatiently, "Yes, yes, let him speak."

Rhodes, who knew no Afrikaans, spoke through an interpreter. He described the importance of the gold discovery and the urgent necessity of shaping measures for its protection. He put the case well, but with a lack of diplomacy, and he could not quite keep a hint of dogmatism out of his speech. When he had finished, Kruger leaned forward, and pointing the stem of his pipe at Rhodes, said: "Tell him I have heard all these stories before. I am here to protect my burghers as well as the Rand people. I know what I have to do, and I will do what I consider is right."

So ended the interview. But whatever misgivings might have arisen in consequence of it, it was considered that the terms which were finally decided upon were unusually generous. These provided that the owner of a farm on which gold was found should be entitled to a mynpacht in extent about one-tenth of the farm, the rest to be thrown open to diggers, in claims to be pegged by them at twenty shillings a month each. The Government was to be entitled to half the licence money, and the mynpachts to pay about ten shillings a morgen on each.

It was long, however, before the members of the executive were convinced of the genuineness of the Rand. The President himself was one of the sceptics. To convince him, Robinson, after his shaft on Langlaagte had reached the first level where gold was found, went over to Pretoria and told him all about it.

"I have heard all about it," Kruger replied, "but I am told that it is absurd to attach any importance to your discovery."

"Will you do me the favour to come over?" Robinson asked. "I will show you the reef, and show you also the gold that is in the reef."

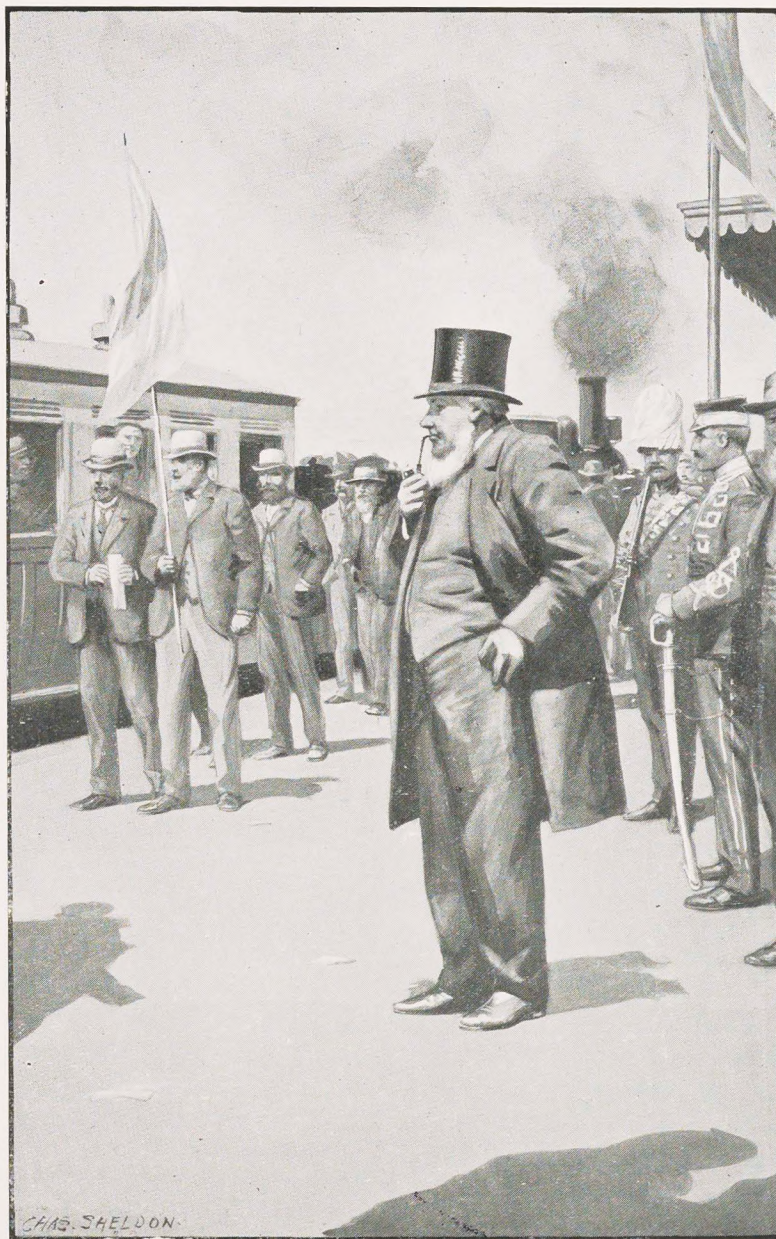
He agreed, and went over to Langlaagte the next day. Robinson took him up to the hoist and said "Would you mind going down and choosing some of the stuff yourself? A man will go with you with a basket to bring it up again, and we will pan it in a dish so that you can see for yourself that the reef contains gold."

The President, still wearing his old broad-brimmed, black beaver hat, went down the shaft accordingly and was taken along the level. He pointed out some of the rock that had been broken and was lying there. It was brought up in a basket, and when he returned Robinson had ready a pestle and mortar and a dish, and it was panned in his presence. He watched the operation closely, and when he saw the result, he said: "Yes, now I see there is gold without any doubt, and I am very glad of it."

Only then did either of them realise the disaster that had befallen the President's hat. He had been wearing it all the time, and as the roof of the level was dripping water it became quite waterlogged. Robinson had forgotten to wrap a towel round it to protect it, and now the President, taking it off and holding it out to him, ruefully explained: "Look, my hat has been ruined by water." However, he was taken into an office near the shaft to meditate on the future of the reef while the hat was taken away, dried carefully with a soft towel, brushed, and returned to him. Satisfied with his adventure, he returned to Pretoria, the first layman to go down a Johannesburg gold mine.

So the Rand speedily developed. Under the Gold Law a Diggers' Committee was elected, to act as intermediary between the miners and the Government on all matters relating to the mines, and on this body Robinson also served. The city of Johannesburg was laid out, as has been told, and the boom period set in. Only one difficulty now confronted the infant industry. This was the question of fuel for the stamping-mills. The country being treeless, and the nearest known coal mines some hundreds of miles distant, the problem seemed likely to be acute; but it was solved by an extraordinarily lucky find of huge coal deposits at Witbank. Nothing now stood in the way of an immense development. It was natural that shares went soaring and the wildest speculation took place.

But, as events were to show, there was one possibility that had been left out of the reckoning, and after the fashion of South Africa, it was the unforeseen that happened. One year it rained beyond all belief, coming down in sheets day after day, and reducing the mud walls of the little shanties that were Johannesburg to pulp, then to wet sand. Every here and there a wall quietly subsided, and became a heap of glistening sand, across which strange views of the domestic life of the pioneers were revealed. This, however, did not worry the miners; it was a nuisance, but it was nothing more. But the next year, the rain, repenting of its excesses, stayed away altogether, and drought held the country in its grip; and this was far more serious.



President Kruger opening the first Railway in the Transvaal
at Boksburg, 1889.

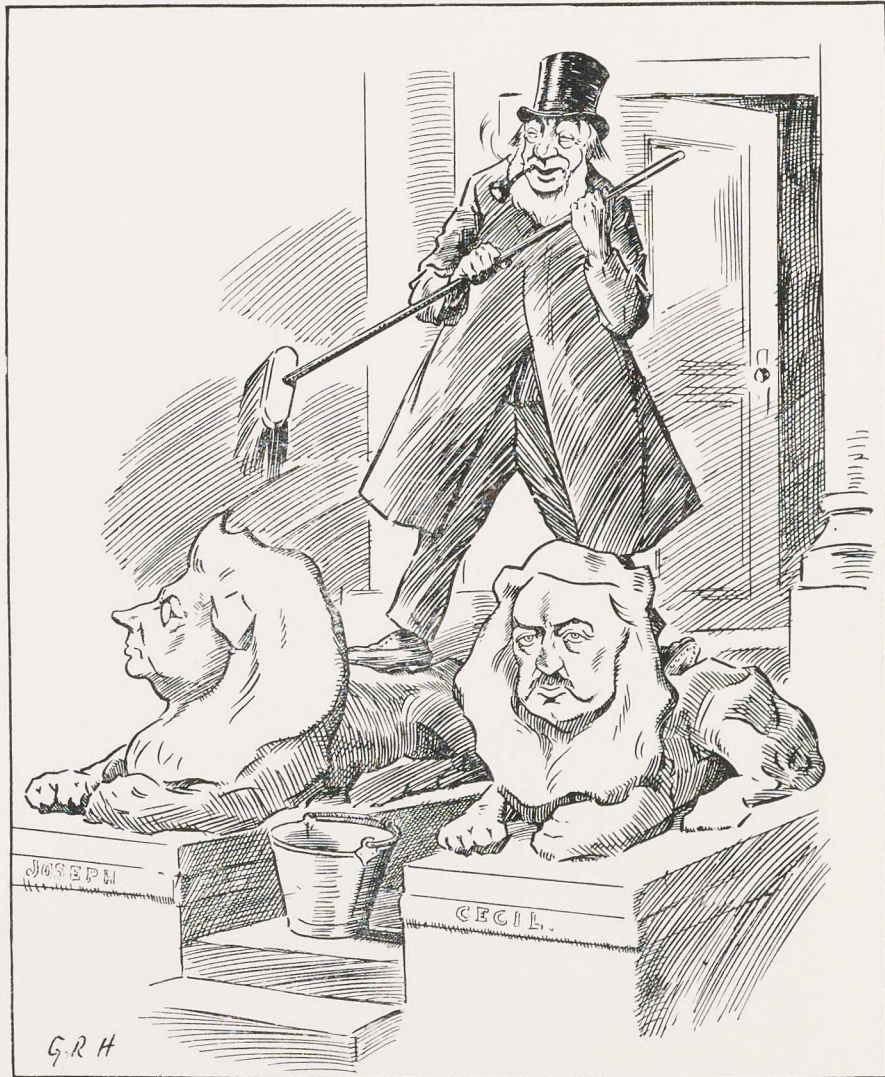
Drawn by Charles Sheldon.

It must be remembered that there was no railway then, for this was only 1889. The trek-ox, who bore South Africa on his back for so many generations, now had the burden of the Rand upon his broad shoulders. He it was who brought the machinery up from the coast, as it was his brother, the coach-horse, who carried down the gold. But if the veld became a desert, no beast could cross it, and so, when the grass withered up in the drought, transport dwindled away to nothing—for the horseless carriage, in which the President was dubiously to trust himself for a few minutes some years later, had not yet been thought of. And the consequence of this interruption was that for the first time depression visited the goldfields. As values had boomed before, so they slumped now, and many began to feel the pinch. The optimists of yesterday were suddenly converted and became prophets of gloom; the pessimists shook sadly triumphant heads, and the inevitable agitation against the Government began. For, as every South African knows, if it doesn't rain, whose fault can that be but the Government's?

Yet another deputation set off for Pretoria, this time seeking to interview the President, in order to put before him their grievances and to demand redress. He listened with patient attention, hearing them gravely to the end. When they had quite finished, he ventured to express his surprise.

"I have given you every facility to better your position in the country," he said. "By your own injudicious acts you have burdened yourselves with responsibilities which have now entailed losses upon you, and for this you seek to hold the Government responsible. I gave you the gold claims at a fair license money. You have had every chance of taking out the gold, but instead of doing that you have devoted your time to speculation. You now find that you have paid too much for what you have bought. Do you want the Government to reimburse you for your losses? What is the Government to do?"

"You remind me of an incident that once occurred to me," he went on abruptly. "I had a monkey. We were great friends, and one day were out for a walk together. It was bitterly cold, and I



OOM PAUL'S LIONS, 1896.

A clever cartoon drawn by Geo. H. Halkett of the Pall Mall Gazette, for the Pretoria Press, after seeing the photo reproduced on the opposite page.

said to the monkey "I will make a fire to warm us." I gathered some sticks, piled them up, and made a fire that we might warm ourselves. The monkey sat next to me, but in turning round he burnt his tail in the embers. Having done so, he immediately flew at me, and bit me in the leg. I said to the monkey, "Why have you done that? I have fed you and made a fire for both of us, and you foolishly burn your tail. You then turn round and bite me for it. Surely I hardly deserve such treatment from you?"

There was a long pause when Kruger finished speaking. He took out his pipe, lit it, and began to smoke. He puffed meditatively a few minutes looking out of the window the while, then without turning his eyes, he said quietly: "You can draw the moral for yourselves."

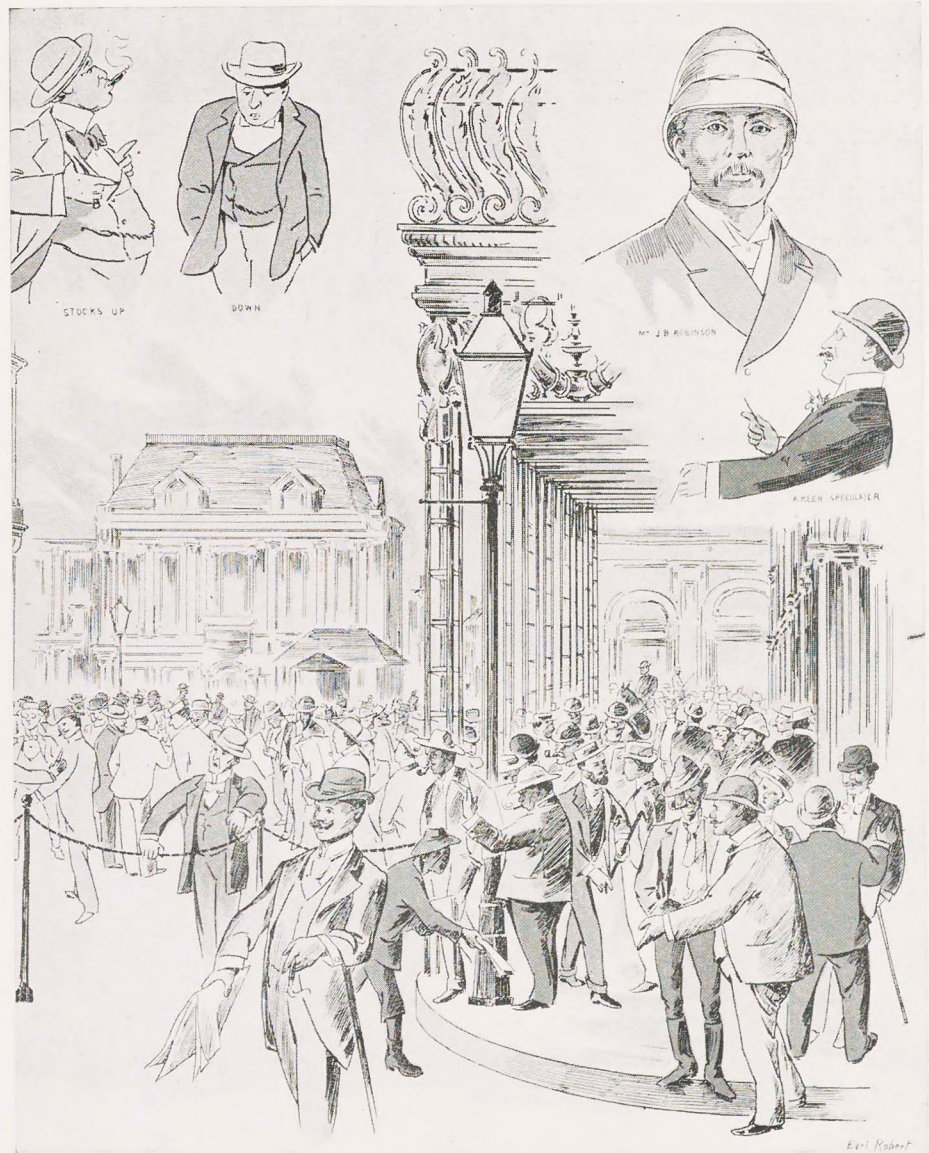
The deputation silently withdrew.



Photo by Leo Weinthal.

President Kruger on his famous stoep. Showing the marble Lions presented by the late Mr. B. I. Barnato.

Great Days at the Rand.



"Between the chains" Johannesburg in the early nineties.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOHANNESBURG AND LONDON

Those were great days. The year 1887 in particular was a year of marvellous doings, when no story was too incredible to be believed, and no vision of Eldorado seemed impossible. Pessimists had suggested that the Rand would prove a wash-out, like Barberton before it; and pessimists had been confounded. Optimists had declared that here were the greatest goldfields in the world; and their prophecies had come true. The wildest dreams of the most hare-brained visionaries now came to be believed, for commonsense and its slow, hesitating caution had proved to be mistaken, and criticism had so often proved wrong and the wildest fantasy the sober truth, that in the end criticism itself had for very shame to be silent. Later it was found that the deposits were, on the whole, a low-grade proposition, and that the extravagant legends of several ounces to the ton—once even it was ounces of rock to the ton of gold!—must give place to more modest claims; yet even so the fact remained that the Witwatersrand was in truth the greatest goldfield ever discovered in the history of the world; and the pioneers who shared in the beginnings of its development might justly hope for wonders. A future too dazzling to be defined unfolded itself before eyes no longer capable of expressing either scepticism or surprise, for when facts resemble miracles, credulity itself becomes wisdom. Small wonder then that men flocked to the Rand from all parts of South Africa, and soon from countries overseas, and presently from the uttermost ends of the earth. The Kimberley men were first, naturally enough, and they eyed each other watchfully even while they picked their own pieces of ground. Barnato, Rhodes and Beit, and many others were there as well as Robinson—each trying to pick out the plums for himself before the others could get them, each keeping one eye on the ground the other on his rivals. There were long, complicated manoeuvres, by which each man sought to obtain the prize for himself and to put his rival off the scent. At first, too there was much bargaining with the joyful,

if bewildered, owners of the gold-bearing farms, much bidding against one another, much courting of the puzzled farmers.

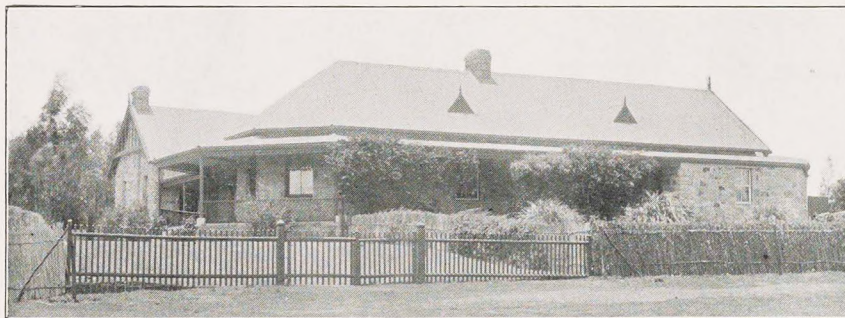
Once Rhodes and Robinson went to buy a farm, arriving almost at the same moment, but unknown to each other. Rhodes walked up and down the garden with the owner, bargaining with him in his slow, halting, clumsy Afrikaans, and finding it more and more difficult to win him over. Robinson, meanwhile, having been told that the man of the house was engaged when he arrived, laid siege to the good wife in the kitchen of the homestead. He spoke fluent Afrikaans and was accustomed to business dealings with the Boers; but the most effective part of his eloquence was the bag of golden sovereigns with which, at the psychological moment he confronted her dazzled eyes. So when Rhodes and the husband after failing to come to any agreement, came in from the garden, they found that the good lady had already sold the farm to Robinson in the kitchen, and nothing was left to be considered but the formalities of the sale.

Many of the farmers, seeing the price of land go soaring to such dizzy heights, began to grow nervous as to their titles to their land and the correctness of their boundaries. In the old days, farms had seldom been properly surveyed, for there was room enough for all, boundary disputes were as rare as surveyors' fees were high and moreover the services of competent men to make the surveys were not easily come by. So it happened that when Robinson employed a surveyor to delimit accurately the boundaries of some of his own farms, one of his neighbours mentioned his own anxiety in the matter. This man's name was du Toit, his farm was called "Waterval," and it was contiguous to one of Robinson's properties. Robinson, to set du Toit's fears at rest, sent his own surveyor to make an accurate delimitation of du Toit's ground; and this was carried out at Robinson's expense. Du Toit, as a sign of his gratitude assured Robinson that if he ever chose to sell the farm Robinson should have the first refusal of it. Such a promise is called a *Voorkeurrecht*, and is legally binding upon the man who makes it, under South African law, but it appears to be uncertain whether it is equally binding to his heirs. In after years this promise figured in a legal

action which was brought against Robinson, so that it is as well to understand what are the facts. One additional point about it may be mentioned. On a superficial inquiry, the service performed by Robinson to du Toit in establishing at his own expense the accuracy of the latter's boundaries might seem to furnish a consideration hardly adequate for so important a promise to be based upon it. But it must be remembered that, where any farm might well turn out to be goldbearing, the accuracy of boundaries was a point of the first importance. Inability to establish legal title to a few acres of ground on the boundary of the farm, where the ownership was disputed, might mean the loss to a farmer of many thousands of pounds. This would be no question of a few morgen of grazing ground, but of the possession of possible gold reefs worth perhaps tens of thousands. Thus to release a landowner, once for all, from any anxiety on the score of his title was to render him a service of very considerable importance.

This was in 1887. Robinson's mine at Langlaagte now had begun operations, advances were made by his other properties, and in 1889 the Randfontein Company was formed. This Company was originally merely a holding company, formed to make purchases of gold-bearing land, and having interests in many minor concerns but not as yet undertaking mining operations on its own account. The Eckstein interests were at first largely represented on the Board.

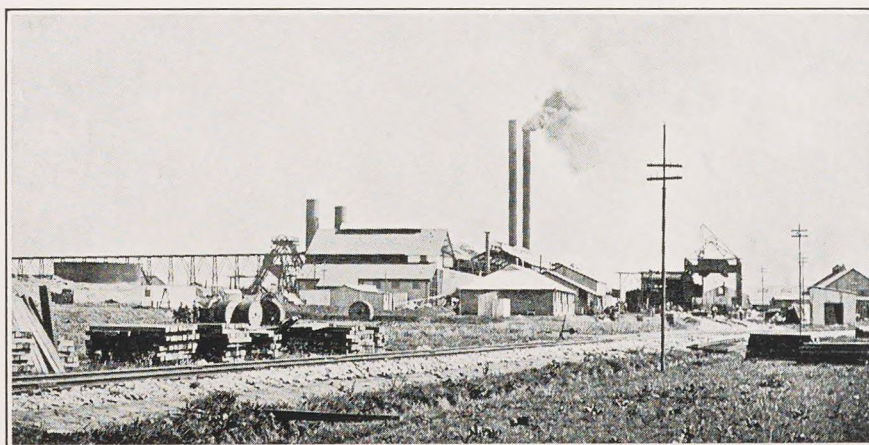
Meanwhile Rhodes also had set to work, and his interests were represented mainly by the Consolidated Gold Fields of South Africa. Rhodes was never so complete an optimist as Robinson, so far as the Rand was concerned, and his interests were not comparable in magnitude. Nevertheless, they were large enough to make him a factor of some importance in the doings of the Witwatersrand. The mutual dislike which Rhodes and Robinson had conceived for each other in their Kimberley days grew more intense at Johannesburg, even though it did not appear in their outward intercourse. Nor, of course, was it allowed to interfere with business interests. Rhodes even suggested to Robinson an amalgamation of their interests, which the latter refused, on the ground that Rhodes' interests were not sufficiently valuable. Politically, their paths seldom crossed.



The Homestead, the General Manager's Residence at Randfontein.



The late Mr. James Ferguson, Managing Director, Langlaagte Estate Gold Mines and Randfontein Estates.



A general view of the Randfontein Gold Mines.

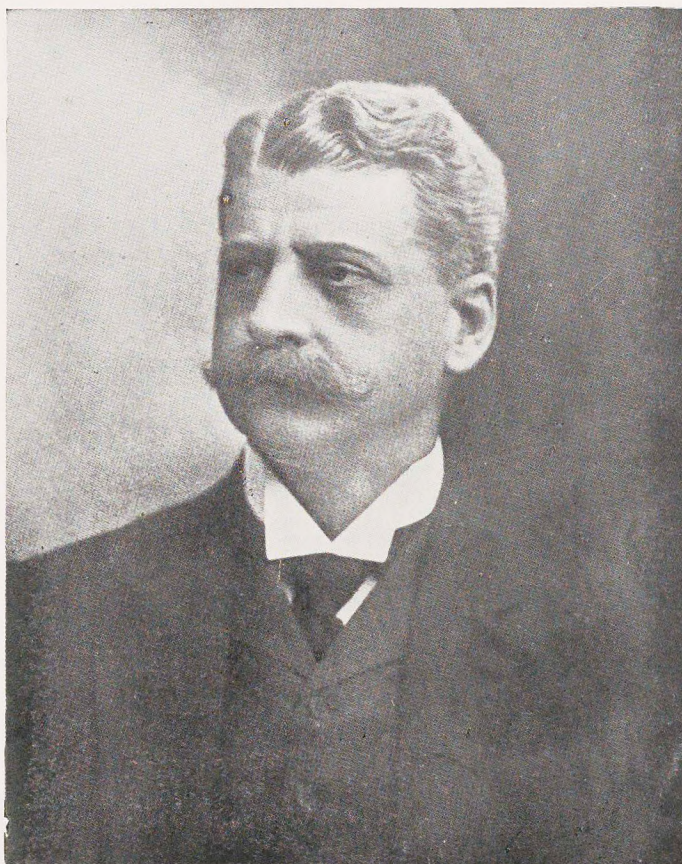
Robinson finding that the Transvaal now claimed his attention, while Rhodes rose to fame at the Cape and matured his schemes in the Cape House of Assembly.

In 1889 a hospital was to be established at Johannesburg, not before it was needed. One Mr. Stevens, commonly known as Zanzibar Stevens, undertook to collect subscriptions, and approached Robinson, who at once put his name down for £500, and volunteered to raise a like sum from each of nine of his friends. He carried out his promise, and the hospital benefited to the extent of £5,000.

The various companies having now been fairly launched, and the critical period tided over, Robinson thought himself entitled to a holiday. Accordingly, he removed, with his family, to England and began to look out for a house in London, setting the fashion for other Kimberley millionaires. But he returned in 1891, and bought a house at Wynberg, near Cape Town, where he had some thoughts of establishing a permanent residence when he should retire from business; he was now fifty-one years of age. This visit, however, was only a temporary one, and he remained in London till the news that the Randfontein Company had got into serious difficulties brought him back post-haste in 1893.

There had already been difficulties in 1889; not merely the general depression, caused by the drought, but one of those recurrent spasms of uncertainty that shook the Rand from time to time, when costs went up and profits came down, and people began to wonder whether the Rand could really do all that was claimed for it, or whether there might not be a catch somewhere. As one such crisis was overcome by the discovery of the cyanide process this one was met by the beginnings of deep-level mining—the shafts being sunk, not a paltry few hundred feet, as at the beginning, but thousands of feet into the bowels of the earth, till at the present the deepest mine reaches down a mile and more beneath the surface.

Robinson was one of the believers in the deep-level system, again in the teeth of a vast array of sceptics. He was asked if he would bet on the success of the new idea, and for how much he would



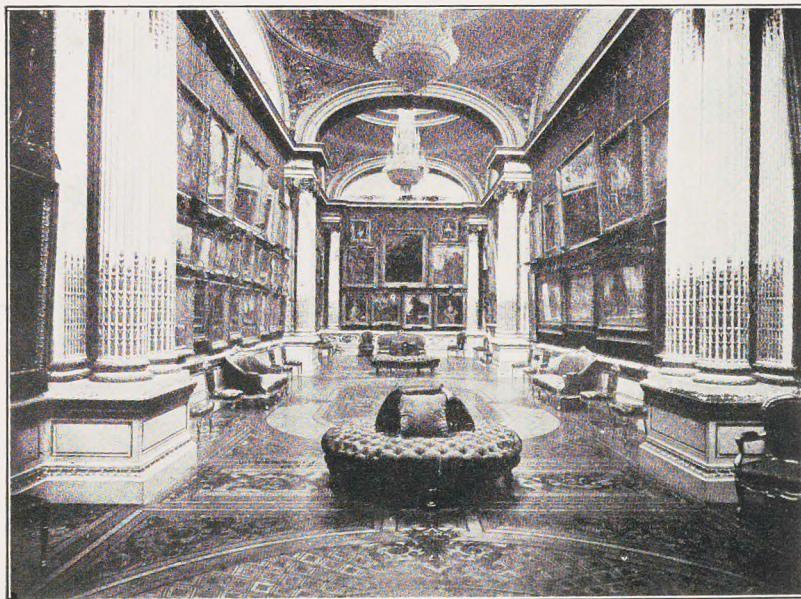
Sir Jan S. LANGERMAN,
General Manager of the Robinson Group in the Transvaal
from 1894.

back his belief in it. He replied "There is five thousand pounds to my credit in the Standard Bank. I will back it with that." He won.

But the troubles of 1893 were the fruit of very different causes. Chief of these, in Robinson's view, was the method of appointing directors which the Randfontein Company had pursued. The Company was a composite body, comprising several quite distinct groups of interests, and each of these had a director upon the Board. This policy, which in theory should have facilitated co-operation, in practice led to something much more like chaos, and the Company failed to make headway. After four years of existence, it had got into such serious difficulties that Robinson had to come out from London to pull things together.

He set to work with great energy at once; but the operation required handling as delicate as it was energetic. His mastery of the subtleties of high finance was never more convincingly demonstrated than in his handling of this crisis. Gradually he bought out and eliminated the Eckstein interests, many of the other interests likewise, and by degrees succeeded in concentrating entire control in his own hands. Then he completely reorganised the directorate. Each of the new directors was chosen, not for his connection with this or that constituent interest, but for his expert knowledge of some branch of the mining operations which the Company undertook to perform. At their head was Robinson himself, but as he now spent much of his time in England he appointed Mr. (now Sir) J. Langerman to be his representative on the Board, and to act generally as his deputy.

Neither Robinson nor Langerman, on his behalf, was in the position of a dictator. The Board of the Company had been reorganised and was now in the nature of a council of experts. This Council discussed fully all matters of policy, and it was left for the Chairman to co-ordinate the views of the various experts; giving coherence to their policy, rather than imposing a policy of his own upon them.



Above : Dudley House, Park Lane, Sir Joseph Robinson's London Residence, from 1894.

Below : The Art Gallery at Dudley House.

Under the new system, a change came over the prospects of the Company at once. It began to make large profits and regained the full confidence of the investors. Had it not been for Robinson's prompt and vigorous action at this time, and the wise policy he initiated, the Company would have to come to a sudden end in the eighteen-nineties. That it did not do so was due to him alone.

After this he again returned to London, where he had some thoughts of settling. The call of his own country proved too strong in the end, and it was the Wynberg house that was to claim him in his last years, but for the present he established himself overseas for the education of his children. He bought the lease of Dudley House in Park Lane, and began to fill it with fine furniture and works of art ; indulging now and then a taste for such things that had had little scope in the rough and strenuous life of the mining towns where his life had formerly been spent.

His taste in pictures leaned strongly to the eighteenth century ; that century, the spirit of which lingered in parts of South Africa for many years after it had become extinct in Europe. He collected several fine examples of the English school of that period, and also a few of more modern date, holding it the duty of a patron to give some support to living artists instead of merely confining himself to collecting the works of Old Masters. Several notably good Italian old masters were also acquired. But his chief interest was in the eighteenth century painting of the French and English schools. Also, like a good South African he purchased several pictures of the Dutch school of the seventeenth century—a school which has a special interest for South Africans, for it was from the countrymen and compatriots of these painters that the first settlers in the Cape were drawn, and the life portrayed in these pictures is in some respects nearer to the life of South African Dutch than to the modern life of Holland. It gave him great pleasure to indulge his taste for these things, and it could never be said of Robinson as it was of another magnate who also bought himself a house in Park Lane, that the only pictures it contained were photographs of himself, and the only book was Ruff's Guide to the Turf.

From Sir Joseph's Collection of Old Masters.

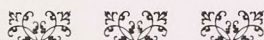


Portrait of a Gentleman.
by Frans Hals.



Lisbeth Van Ryn's Sister.
by Rembrandt.

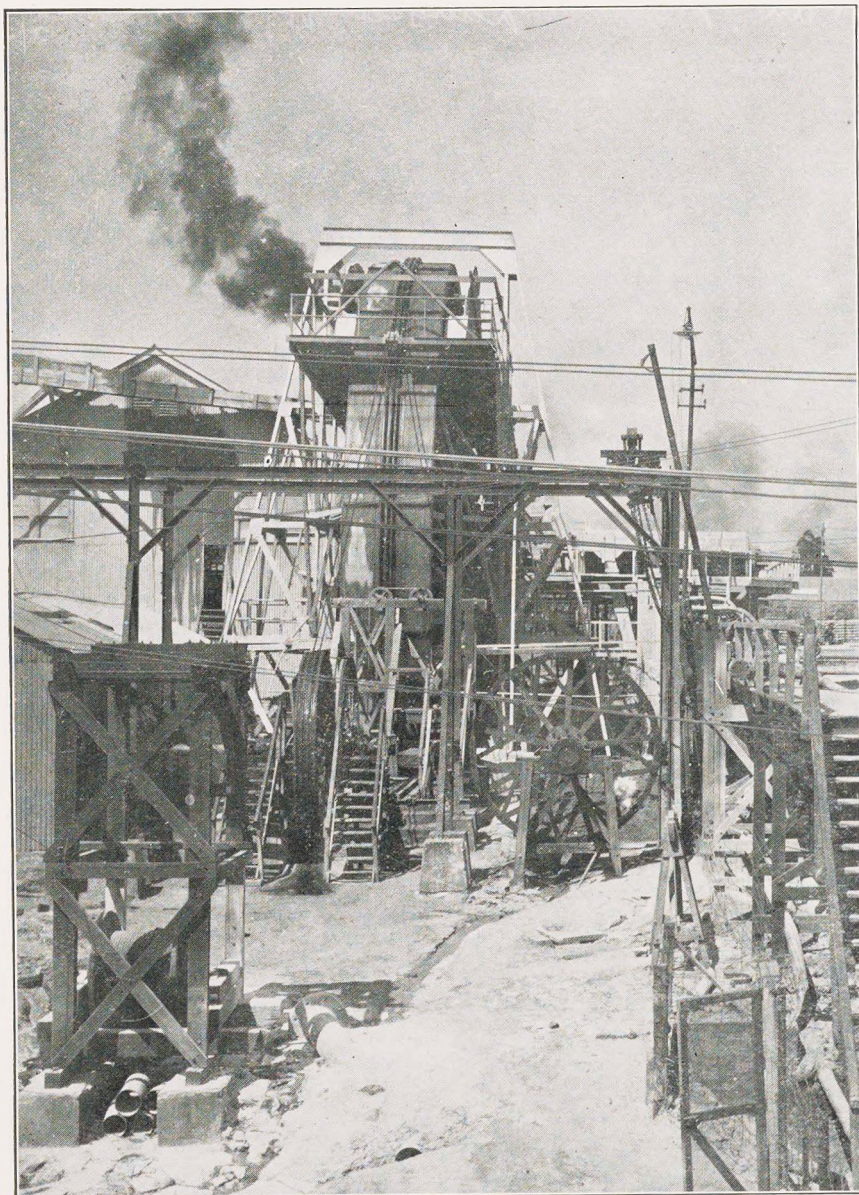
Robinson came to love his pictures, more so, perhaps, than he realised at the time. For, many years afterwards, when he was giving up his London home, to reside permanently in his own country, it was decided to sell the collection which had been stored for some years. But when they were put up at Christie's, he renewed his acquaintance with them, and he found himself more and more unwilling to part with them, with the result that most of them (practically the whole collection) were bought in on his own account. Thus he decided to forego a return of something like a quarter of a million sterling, rather than be parted from his pictures for good.



Lady and Child.
by Romney



The Page.
by Gainsborough



A scene on the Langlaagte Estate Gold Mine.

He had long since resigned his seat in the Cape Parliament. His interests were now almost wholly in the Transvaal, and it was no longer feasible for him to take any very active part in Cape politics. Even had this been otherwise, it is probable that his increasing deafness would have handicapped him too severely in debate. Nevertheless, it was to some extent a misfortune that he was out of politics at the beginning of the nineties, and had thus in some degree deprived himself of the power of exerting a moderating influence upon the other representatives of the mining industry. To allow the impression to be created that the whole of the industry was solidly hostile to the Dutch-speaking population—an impression which did grow up in the nineties—was inevitably to make that industry unpopular, and intensely distrusted, in the country; and moreover, even the feelings of loyalty to the British connection and enthusiasm for the British Empire which grew so rapidly in that decade came to be regarded in some quarters as tainted by the alliance with great financial interests. The mining industry had now reached such a pitch of importance that it overshadowed everything else, and the magnates came to be looked on as aiming at something like an oligarchy. Had Robinson been able to remain in politics, and to make clear his own position on the racial question, which was still the moderate and conciliatory one of earlier days, he might have succeeded in clearing away some of the mists of suspicion and distrust which hung so heavily over the political life of the period. But this was not to be. He had had to resign his seat and thus to leave a clear field for the more extreme parties of both sides, and in the dust and heat of their conflict the realities of the situation were obscured.



The Right Hon. Sir Starr Jameson, Bart., C.B.,
when Dr. L. S. Jameson, 1896.

CHAPTER IX.

THE JAMESON RAID AND AFTER

In 1895 Robinson was living temporarily at his house in Park Lane, intending to return to South Africa at the beginning of the next year. For some time he had been receiving disquieting messages from the Transvaal, where affairs seemed to be approaching a crisis. On his visit in 1893, he had seen for himself the state of affairs, and recognised that it contained an element of grave danger. This judgment was confirmed by later reports, and he began to consider seriously the question whether it might not be his duty to warn the British Government of what was happening.

The conditions then prevailing in the Transvaal require only the briefest notice here, for they have been fully described by countless writers. The discovery of the goldfields had brought to the Republic a huge influx of population, consisting largely of English people and Anglicised Foreigners, together with a motley collection of cosmopolitan scallywags. This great population, which exceeded the older population of the Republic itself, was all more or less concentrated at one spot, the town of Johannesburg and its environs. Its members were called by the Boers "Uitlanders"; that is, foreigners. Under the laws of the Republic, they suffered certain political disabilities, the chief of which was the denial of the franchise. At the same time, they were taxed by the Republic and—what was worse from their point of view—they found their business career hampered by the effects of oppressive monopolies and concessions. The Rand thus became a focus of discontent, which, being all concentrated in a single area, had a much greater intensity than if it had been spread over the country as a whole. This discontent, which had in reality an economic basis, was inflamed and to some extent diverted from its true object—the economic policy of the state—by the racial quarrel which accompanied it, and which had its roots far back in the history of South Africa. Where the Government was Dutch and the disaffected citizens were English, it was inevitable that the economic quarrel should transform itself into a

racial one. The hangers-on of both sides knew how to profit by this, and very soon Afrikaner patriots imported from Holland found themselves confronted with sturdy British imperialists from the ghettos of Warsaw.

So extreme was the discontent of a certain section of the Uitlanders that a conspiracy was formed to overthrow the Government. The people of Johannesburg were to be armed and preparations made for its defence. Cecil Rhodes, the Prime Minister of the Cape Colony, secretly countenanced the plot—an abuse of his position which was unpardonable, but which would nevertheless in all probability have been pardoned if he had succeeded—and Dr. Jameson, at the head of a force composed largely of the Chartered Company's police, was to give the signal for the insurrection by invading the Transvaal. The Government was to be overturned, Kruger deposed from the Presidency, and then—what?

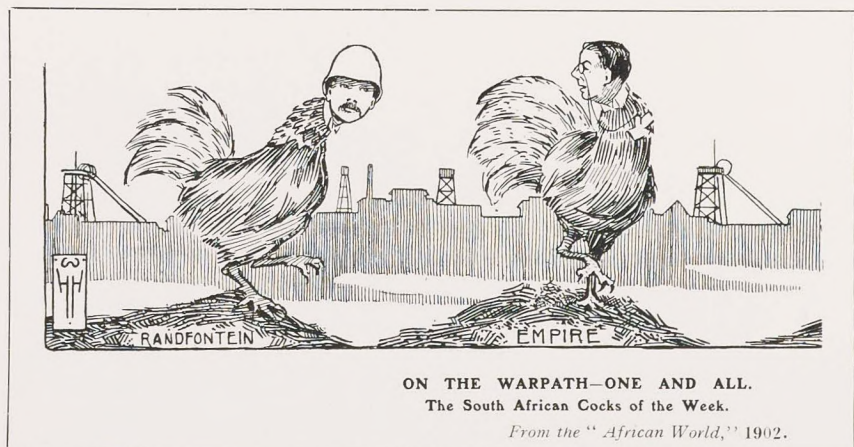
That was just the difficulty. Civil war would be no novelty in the Transvaal. There were precedents for an "armed protest," against an unpopular Government, as none knew better than Kruger himself, who owed his reputation largely to his unwavering defence of constitutional government in the earlier troubles of the Republic. If, then, an armed protest were made, if it were successful, if Kruger were deposed and Joubert, the liberal, installed in his place—as was Jameson's plan—and a Cromwellian reform of the administration followed, it was conceivable that the Boers might accept the result. But here the racial question intervened. Had the Uitlanders been merely business men, concerned with the elimination of business difficulties, a reform of the Republican Administration would have satisfied them. But there were many among their number who believed that their object should be, not the reform of the Republic, but its annihilation and absorption into the British Empire. Many, it is only fair to say, believed that Kruger was aiming at the establishment of Dutch dominance in South Africa and the severance of the British Colonies from the Empire. A great Pan-Afrikaner conspiracy was alleged to have been discovered, extending throughout South Africa, and having as its goal the setting-up of a United States

of South Africa under its own flag. All kinds of people were believed to be implicated, even Jan Hofmeyr, the leader of the Bond party in the Cape, being among them. Modern historians consider this conspiracy to have been an absolute myth, but it is only fair to the Uitlanders to remember that they were convinced, however mistakenly, of its reality. Hence they, or some of them, thought that if they raised the Union Jack on the Rand, they might strike a death-blow at this plot, and secure British ascendancy for ever. Consequently, they urged that the rising should be under the Union Jack. But others saw that the obvious result of a rebellion under the Union Jack would be to convince the Boers that the rebellion was fomented by England, and the last state would be worse than the first. So the conspirators disagreed, and presently there was a deadlock.

Robinson himself had declined to take any part in the whole business, and this for more reasons than one. He did not believe in the existence of the Pan-Afrikander conspiracy; he knew the Boers well, understood their language, had fought beside them in old days, had a lifelong intimacy with them; and he saw no signs of any such plot. Moreover, he was not a stranger to the South African Republic, as were many or most of the conspirators; his brother William, in the days before the gold discoveries, had been a candidate for the Presidency against Kruger's predecessor, Burgers. He himself knew Kruger intimately and had a high respect for him. He knew well enough that the Boers were as stubborn a race as any on earth, and perhaps the least easily intimidated, so that any rebellion was likely to meet with a resistance vigorous, prolonged, and in all probability successful. Moreover, he held that the terms on which the goldfields had been thrown open were more generous than would have been obtained anywhere else in the world, that it was this generosity that had made it possible for the Uitlanders to accumulate great fortunes, as they were doing, and that in the circumstances to raise an outcry over minor disabilities was the blackest ingratitude. The mine-owners, he held, were business men who had come to the Republic for the purpose of making money, and in that purpose they were obviously succeeding. Why then should they cry for the moon? As for the racial question, his sympathies



From "The Owl," Capetown, 1899.



were naturally on the British side, but he knew South African History too well to believe that the Boer character could be changed by a *coup d'etat*. Force could accomplish nothing, conciliation everything. It was his lifelong creed.

This attitude naturally caused him to be regarded with a good deal of suspicion by the people who could not understand how any man could refrain from pursuing the easy and spectacular course that attracted them. That he refrained because it was not in his opinion the right course was too simple an explanation for them ; they had to find some motive to attribute to him, and they drew on their imaginations for the purpose. Most of us like to believe that, if we could only adopt a firm attitude towards our political enemies and perhaps use a little judicious force against them, they would at once acknowledge the error of their ways and come over to our side ; but, if we believe this, it is not because it is true, but because it flatters our vanity to think that it is so. Robinson had no such belief in the value of what is called a "firm policy" against the Boers, and his scepticism ruffled the vanity of its upholders accordingly. This was his crime, and slander was its punishment.

The Uitlander conspiracy went on without him. It was, of course, kept secret, but it was obvious to every observer that trouble was brewing in Johannesburg. Robinson knew this as well as anybody, but he did not know the details any more than the general public did. He only knew that the state of things on the Rand was decidedly threatening ; so threatening, in fact, that he decided to go there himself, see if he could not bring about a better feeling, and use his influence with the President. At the same time, he would satisfy himself as to the true state of affairs and then place his conclusions before the British Government. With this object, he arranged to leave England on the 4th January, and meantime he devoted himself to going through his papers and making his plans for departure. While he was thus engaged, he received a letter from Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, inviting him to spend a few days at Highbury, in order to discuss South African affairs. Robinson was not very willing to accept this invitation, on account of its interference



The late Right Hon. JOSEPH CHAMBERLAIN, P.C., M.P.
Secretary of State for the Colonies before, during and after the Boer War.

with his work, for he was up to the eyes in the task of sorting out his multifarious interests and putting everything in order for his intended absence. If he were to spend Tuesday and Wednesday at Highbury, he hardly saw how he could get through all he had to do. At the same time, if matters were really critical he ought not to let his own interests stand in the way of any service he could perform to the cause of peace. It was not, however, left to him to decide, for events took a sudden, dramatic turn.

Before Robinson had answered the invitation, there came a telegram from Chamberlain, saying that he had received important despatches from the Governor of Cape Colony, Sir Hercules Robinson, and was leaving for London the same evening, and asking Robinson to call on him in Downing Street next morning. The latter did so, saying as soon as he entered the room: "I have called to see you because I am afraid there will be a row between the mining population and the Government, and I have come to ask you to be good enough to proffer your services to Kruger to bring about an amicable arrangement between the parties."

"Have you not received a cable this morning?" Chamberlain asked, with some surprise.

"No," said Robinson. "I have not been to my office."

"A man called Jameson has invaded the Transvaal," said Chamberlain, "with eight hundred men and six machine guns." This startling news was substantially true, except that it exaggerated somewhat the number of Jameson's force.

For some time before this (it is now known) the plans of the Reform Committee, as the conspirators were called, had been going none too well. Although, when it came to the test, there were some natural qualms as to the necessity of shedding blood, and some hope that the more liberal section of the burghers themselves might prevail in the councils of the Republic, the real difficulty was the flag question. A section of the Reformers still desired to rise under the Vierkleur, others under the Union Jack. Rhodes himself wavered, but he was generally on the side of the Union Jack. He said that he did



The Right Hon. Cecil John Rhodes, 1896.

not desire merely to supplant a Boer Republic by a British one : he declared afterwards, " I was not going to risk my position to change President Kruger for President J. B. Robinson." Thus Robinson's name had evidently occurred to him as that of a suitable head for the imaginary Republic the idea of which a section of the Reformers had sometimes discussed.

It was the peculiar misfortune of the Reformers on the Rand itself that, so far as political ability was concerned, there was no one in their ranks who might be described as being of outstanding personality. They were business men, and all their instincts were for business, industry and finance. It is not of such stuff that Cromwells and Mussolinis are made. Consequently they wasted their time in endless procrastination and futile discussions, while Jameson, the man of action, fumed outside. There was an orgy of telegraphing, that led to no result, while Jameson fretted on the border, and was perpetually told not to move. But he could not remain there for ever, and if he did not move, the opportunity would pass, never to return. Still the Reformers wrangled, hesitated and delayed, till at length Jameson determined to force their hands, and suddenly struck.

Thus it was that Robinson and Chamberlain confronted each other in the office in Downing Street. It would be hard to say which was the more astounded of the two. But they were both men who thought quickly, and after the first shock of surprise the same thought was uppermost in the minds of both : what was best to be done ? They discussed matters for two hours, Robinson giving Chamberlain a full account of the Transvaal situation from his point of view. He told Chamberlain that in his opinion the best thing would be for Chamberlain to cable Kruger at once, offering him every assistance in his power to bring about a settlement. He sat down at Chamberlain's table and drafted the message he would suggest. But the old Buccaneer was in the habit of using language of more vigour and freedom than agreed well with the polished periods of diplomacy, and Chamberlain, after taking the cable out of the room to show it to one of the permanent officials, returned

with a suggestion that some of the words should be altered. After this talk, Robinson returned to his own office, and at once sent off a cable of his own to Kruger, upon much the same lines.

Meanwhile the unhappy Jameson, who had "let down" Rhodes by his act of disobedience, was himself "let down" by the Reformers. Johannesburg failed to rise; Jameson was defeated at Doornkop and his force made prisoners; and the ringleaders of the Reformers were arrested. Such was the sorry end of this amateurish conspiracy. At this distance of time, the chief characteristic of the whole proceeding seems to have been its extreme incompetence. But at the moment, it was inevitable that the Boers should regard it with angry passion as an onslaught upon the independence of their country.

English indignation was diverted from Jameson by the famous telegram from the German Kaiser to Kruger, congratulating him upon his success. This message, which meant for the English only that the Kaiser was interfering in matters that did not concern him, had for Kruger a more tragic interpretation, for he took it as confirmation of his belief that Germany would support him in the event of war with England. This belief, which had been sedulously fostered by interested parties, was by no means unreasonable in itself, when we consider the ambitions of Germany in Africa. He was later to find that Wilhelm II. flattered only to betray.

The raid was followed in the Transvaal by a great outburst of popular passion. The Boers saw in it a threat to their cherished independence, they believed that the British Government had been privy to the plot, and all the smouldering racial passions of the time burst into a sudden blaze. The moderate party among the burghers who had recognised the reality of many of the grievances of the Uitlanders and believed they should be remedied, now stood confounded. Everywhere the extremists were in the ascendant. Many demanded that the ringleaders of the plot should be hanged, as the British had hanged the Slagters Nek conspirators at the beginning of the century. Some were for destroying the mines altogether,

many for confiscating, if not destroying, the properties of the various groups implicated in the Raid.

One of these was the Consolidated Goldfields of South Africa, whose Chairman was Lord Harris. Another was the firm of Wernher, Beit and Co. Lord Harris and Mr. (afterwards Sir) Julius Wernher were consequently anxious to meet Robinson and talk over the situation, and a meeting was arranged, for which a room was engaged at the Coburg Hotel. Mr. (now Sir) Abe Bailey was also present at this meeting, which lasted from half-past eight in the evening until midnight. Lord Harris and Mr. Wernher were extremely nervous about the situation, which indeed was threatening enough for all the mine-owners, and particularly for their firms, which were deeply involved in the conspiracy. If the hot-headed party among the burghers were to go to the length of destroying machinery and damaging mines, it would undoubtedly be the properties of these companies that would be the first to be attacked. Here Robinson had the advantage; for as the full facts about the plot were made known, it was clearly to be seen that he had had no part nor lot in it, and therefore the Republican authorities might listen to him when they stopped their ears against the pleadings of the rebels. There was a long discussion, and eventually Robinson undertook to do what he could to prevent the destruction of property and to bring about a more conciliatory feeling. He was leaving for the Transvaal in a few days, and he was obviously the best man to plead for the Uitlanders, in view of the fact that he was untainted by the conspiracy; so that the others heard his assurance with some relief.

Arrived in the Transvaal, Robinson paid a hasty visit to Johannesburg, and went on at once to Pretoria, where he obtained an interview with the President. He found that Kruger was having great difficulty in restraining the extremists. The burghers, said the old man, were coming to him in dozens, demanding that vigorous action should be taken against the Reformers, and urging that the ringleaders should be put to death. He managed to temporise with these demands; but then they insisted that they should be allowed to destroy the mines. If he spoke to them of the wealth the mines

had brought into the country, they said they did not care about it. They held that this wealth was bought too dear. In the days of their poverty, they had lived contentedly on their farms, and no man had interfered with them. Now the mines had brought wealth, but wealth that had a curse on it, and they would prefer to be poor. Already the mines had brought the curse of the Raid upon them, blood had been shed, and who knew what fresh disturbances they might not cause? Better put an end to the mines and the troubles they brought with them, and return to the "lekker leven"—the pleasant life—of the old days.

Kruger himself had no mind to see his country return to the state of apostolic poverty from which the goldfields had rescued it, nor would he ever have countenanced the destruction of property that was urged upon him, but he told Robinson that he was having the greatest difficulty in keeping the hotheads in check. Robinson said he would help him, and asked him for the names of the leaders of the party that was advocating violence. Kruger gave the names, and Robinson went off to see what he could do.

He called on each of the leaders in turn. These were the fanatical element among the Boers, and they had the obstinacy, as well as the courage, of their convictions. The mainspring of their actions was always the same: fear and hatred of England, intensified by the widespread, though utterly mistaken, belief that Chamberlain had connived at the Raid. Robinson pointed out that the destruction of the mines would in all probability lead to war with England. They replied that England could not spare troops enough to defeat the Republics, and that even if war came they would be quite prepared to fight it out, and to repeat the lesson they had taught the English at Majuba. Others said that the Raiders had shot some of the burghers in a time of peace, that these men had acquired rich gold properties, made large fortunes, and now wanted to seize the Transvaal and the mines. And practically all of them, at that time, including the President, firmly believed that England was responsible for the Raid and that it was really an English plot against the independence of the Republic.

It was this belief that formed the greatest obstacle to Robinson's peacemaking efforts. However, his experience of men and affairs had shown him that political passions are often most bitter where the pocket as well as the heart is involved, and he cast about him to see if the ardour of these men had not been inflamed by the reality or the prospect, of monetary loss. In many cases he found that this was so; they declared that their property had depreciated in value, they had suffered losses by reason of the Raid and its consequences, and they were consoling themselves with bitter words for the shrinkage of their fortunes. Robinson offered to lend them money, and at lower rates than were then charged by the banks—which, in view of the threatening situation, had had to put up their rates—in order to rebuild their fortunes. Many made difficulties, but in the end accepted the offer, and as the chief incentive to bitterness was withdrawn, the situation eased considerably.

Another problem was raised by the imminence of deficit in the revenue, which would have to be met either by borrowing or by the imposition of fresh taxation; and in the circumstances, fresh taxation would inevitably have meant punitive taxation of the mines, for the extreme party would never have let slip an opportunity such as this of bleeding the industry which they held to have shown itself the enemy of the Republic. Kruger asked Robinson to see the banks about it, put the position before them, and see if they could not be persuaded to lend the Government some six hundred thousand sterling. He approached a bank accordingly, but found it unwilling to make the loan, on account of the disturbed state of the country. There was a long discussion, but eventually the bank declared that it would lend the money for one year, on condition that Robinson himself would stand security for the sum. He agreed without hesitation, and the crisis was averted.

At a later time, when the Robinson Bank was in existence, he induced that institution to discount a promissory note for the Government of the Republic for a large sum of money, at six per cent. per annum, while the other banks were charging eight and nine per cent. This was during the great rinderpest epidemic, when many farmers had lost enormous numbers of cattle from the disease, and

were crying out for the Government to assist them. This also was done to avoid the necessity of fresh taxation.

Before leaving England, it should have been mentioned, Robinson had had many interviews with Chamberlain, who was very anxious for Kruger to come to England in order to discuss the situation. Robinson, at that time, spent something like two thousand pounds in cables alone, urging Kruger to accept the invitation. During that time Rhodes arrived in England, and he also had frequent interviews with Chamberlain. Then Rhodes left suddenly for South Africa, greatly to the regret of Robinson, who at once called on Chamberlain, and told him that in his opinion Kruger would not come to England as long as Rhodes was in Africa.

When Robinson returned to the Transvaal, he again urged the President to go to England. But as he had foreseen, the old man refused to go. His burghers were excited and angry, he said, and if he were out of the country there might be a serious outbreak. And in the state of feeling at the time, there was no knowing what that might lead to. It is a fact that at this period the President, far from encouraging the extreme party, was doing his best to restrain them, and he was quite sincere in his belief that if he were to go to England, others might not be able to keep the feeling within bounds. But he had another motive besides this for his refusal, for he was convinced that Rhodes was still intriguing against the Republic, and he feared lest his absence might give the enemy his opportunity.

The President spoke prudently and earnestly enough to his burghers, urging in the strongest terms a policy of moderation and restraint; but in talking privately to Robinson he sometimes gave vent to the bitterness of his soul. Nothing could eradicate from his mind the belief that the British Government had connived at the Raid. Robinson described his interview with Chamberlain, declared his own conviction that Downing Street had had nothing to do with the plot, but in vain. Sometimes Kruger, wearying of the thankless task he had set himself, seemed almost to sympathise with the party of destruction. Robinson would point to the danger of war, and war in which not the Transvaal alone but the whole of

South Africa would be involved, and would play upon the President's well-known horror of blood-guiltiness. Sometimes the old man would be convinced, sometimes he would incline to a mood of weary fatalism, holding that England was determined to force him into war, and saying that if war did come, he was not afraid of it. He would recall the memory of Majuba and base his confidence upon it. Robinson would answer that England also remembered Majuba, and that if there were war, she would take good care that that disaster was not repeated. She would not rest, he said, till she had conquered the Transvaal and the Orange Free State, even if she had to throw her whole strength into the scales; and her whole strength, he reminded the old man, had never yet been displayed in South Africa. A small force might have been defeated in what was, for England, a campaign on the outposts; but to challenge a great nation to put forth her whole might against his burghers would lead to a very different result. "I know the feeling at home," he said, "and I know what would happen in the event of these destructive measures being carried out, and the property not only of English shareholders but of shareholders all over the world being destroyed."

So Kruger restrained the burghers, and Robinson restrained Kruger, and a settlement was patched up as the angry passions gradually dwindled. But the danger of war still remained. Robinson spent something like two hundred thousand pounds in an effort to avert war by easing the economic situation. But he could not destroy the legacy of suspicion left by the Raid, nor could he put a stop to the agitation against the Republic which was carried on in certain quarters, and matters began again to drift towards a crisis. The one tangible achievement of the Raid had been to destroy the slowly increasing power of the moderate reforming party among the burghers, and in a situation charged with tragedy, events marched to their inevitable climax.

During the First Great Boom at the Rand.



Robinson Buildings, (x) Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 1895.

CHAPTER X.

THE ROBINSON BANK—THE INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION —THE POLICY OF DRIFT

Here we may digress for a few pages to tell the history of an institution which, founded about this time, came to an end a few years later. This was the Robinson Banking Company of South Africa, which was founded a few months before the Raid, in 1896, with a capital of three million sterling. A very large proportion of the amount was taken by the French investors, and French directors were elected to the board of the Company. Branches were established in Port Elizabeth, Cape Town and Johannesburg, and the growth of a large and profitable business was confidently expected. There was obviously room for such an undertaking, which would find its principal opening in connection with the export of gold, but which would also engage in other transactions in South Africa. But the Company was born in an unlucky hour, for but a few months after it had begun operations the Jameson Raid threw the Transvaal into confusion. So far as the bank was concerned, all the soundest elements of its business were shattered. Things made a dubious recovery, but the rally was only temporary, and a short three years after the Raid came the Boer War. This in its turn lasted for three years, and during that time no proper business whatever could be transacted.

Finally, in 1905 when the bank had resumed operations after the war and continued them up to that date, the situation again appeared to be serious. At a meeting of the directors, held in London, at which Robinson was present, the question was discussed of whether action should be taken to secure the bank against any losses which were likely to occur. At this meeting, in view of the apparent urgency of the question, Robinson undertook to go to Johannesburg and make a full investigation. He left accordingly for the Transvaal, where he found on his arrival that the trade of Johannesburg was in a state of utter dislocation—the aftermath of war—and that it appeared positively dangerous to make monetary advances or to enter



1. The Head Offices of the Robinson South African Banking Corporation.
2. The Chamber of Mines Buildings.
3. The Anglo-Austrian Building, Rissik Street.
4. Thorne, Stuttaford & Co's Building, Pritchard Street.

into any commercial transactions. This state of things, he found, existed also in the other centres. There appeared to be nothing for it but liquidation, and, armed with that cheerless conclusion, he returned to London. On his arrival, he called another meeting of the directors, explained his views, and laid his conclusions before them ; and it was then decided that the bank should go into voluntary liquidation. So ended the Robinson Bank.



The late Mr. James Tyhurst,
General Manager in London of the Robinson Bank.

There is, however, another side to the story. The Bank, in its short and stormy career, had less than four years of genuine and more or less normal banking business. Yet on its liquidation it returned to the shareholders the whole of its capital of three million sterling in full. Moreover, in the course of its history it had paid out in dividends and bonus on liquidation approximately one million four hundred thousand pounds. Such an achievement, in so short a time, was no small one.

It should be clearly understood that the Robinson Banking Company did not concern itself with political matters in the Transvaal, whether under the Republic or under the Crown Colony

At Langlaagte Estate, 1896.

*Photo : L.W.*

On the Stoep at the Managing Director's House

Left to right : Miss Ida Robinson, (now Countess Labia), Mrs. James Ferguson, Master " Joe " (now Mr. J. B. Robinson), Mr. J. B. (now Sir Joseph) Robinson and Mrs. Leo Weinthal.
 In the foreground : The little Misses Ferguson.

Administration. All such matters were dealt with by Robinson in his private capacity, and for the policy which he adopted he took full personal responsibility. His aim in all such matters, as has been said, was to bring about a better feeling in the country.

Early in 1897—to take up again the threads of our story—the Republican Government set up an industrial Commission of Inquiry to investigate the grievances of the mining population. That there were genuine grievances nobody would deny, more especially since it was these complaints which had furnished the excuse for the recent upheaval. To set up a strong Committee to examine them thoroughly and to suggest a remedy was the obvious course to pursue, and a course which might have led to a solution of the problem and have averted the war, the threatening shadow of which was already looming on the horizon, had not the extreme party among the burghers held so tenaciously that self-preservation was the first law of nature, and utterly distrusted any and every advance from the side of the Uitlanders.



The present Chamber of Mines Buildings at Johannesburg.

THE MINING INDUSTRIAL COMMISSION.



The Constitutional Struggle in 1897.

From the Pretoria "Weekly Press," 1897.

All the leaders of the mining industry were examined by the Commission. Robinson's turn came on the 13th May, and he laid his views concisely before the Commission. These views are worth attention, because they represent the purely business side of the grievances of the mining population, without any of that admixture of racial feeling which so frequently served to confuse the issue.

He began by complaining of the excessively high railway tariff which added unnecessarily to the costs of working. If the working costs of the mines could be reduced by five shillings per ton of ore, the whole industry would be placed on a sound basis, and the disabilities under which the poorer mines were labouring would be removed. The crux of the whole difficulty was to be found in the excessive working costs, with the consequent inability of the poorer mines to pay their way. It was an old problem of the low-grade mines, that perennial bugbear of South African statesmen. But if the reduction of five shillings per ton could be achieved, many mines would be able to work at a narrow margin of profit, while without it they could only carry on operations at a loss, and would therefore be forced to close down altogether. Such a reduction would mean an increase of profit of about £1,250,000 over the whole industry. The state would share in the increased prosperity through the additional employment offered by the expansion of the industry.

At the same time, the mines themselves would have to do their share towards the reduction of costs. He had worked out a scheme by which the five shillings reduction could be apportioned between the mines and the Government, the mines decreasing their expenditure in certain directions, the Government reducing railway rates, and particularly the tariff on coal, reducing taxation and Customs tariffs, and either abolishing, or reforming the terms of the dynamite monopoly. In order to overcome the railway difficulty he urged that the railway should be expropriated by the State.

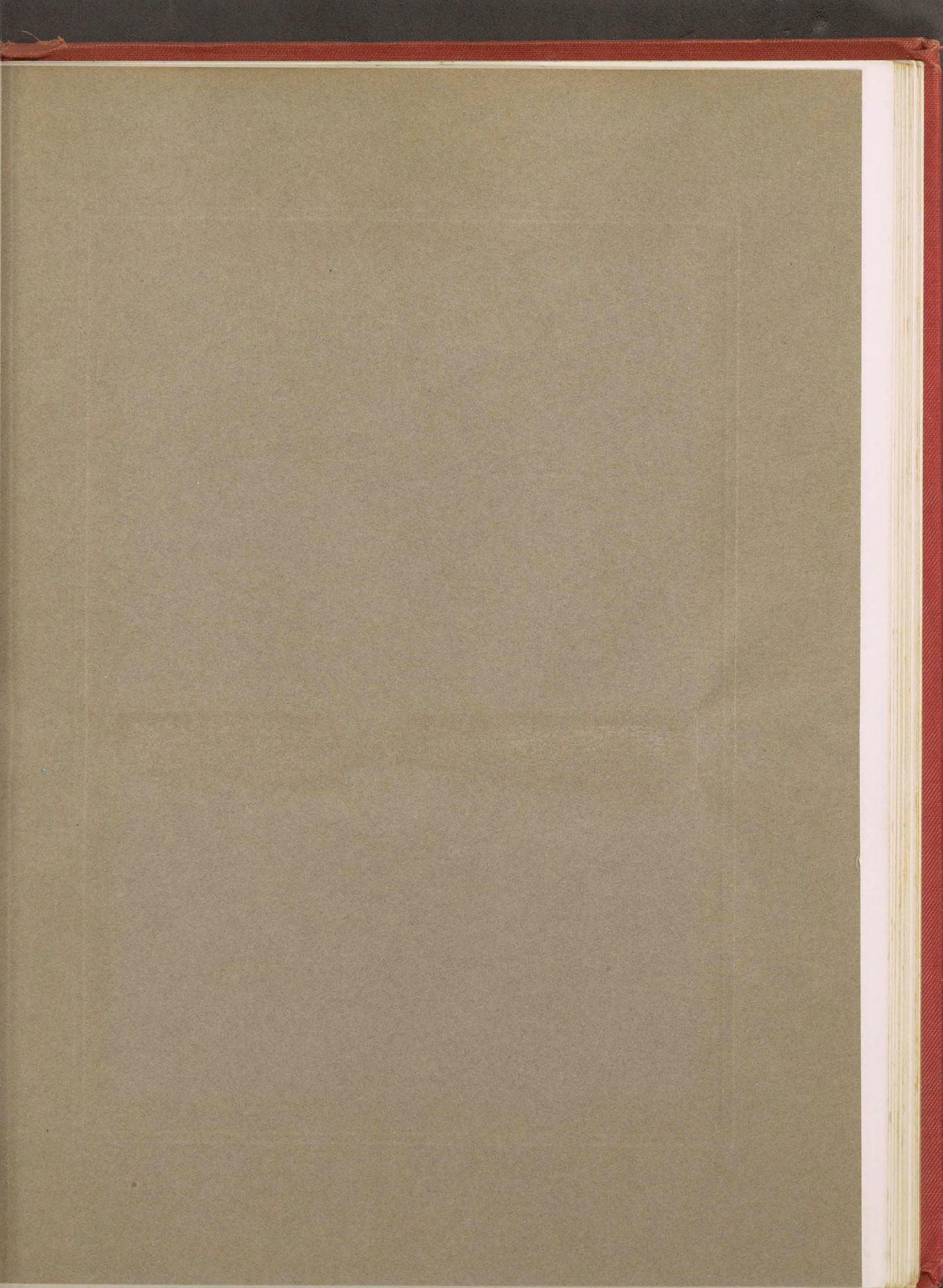
He went on to complain of the maladministration of the Liquor law. This measure, he contended, was an excellent one in itself, but there was nothing like proper enforcement of it. Many of his Companies had suffered greatly from the illicit and unrestrained

supply of strong drink to natives. The same might be said of the Pass Law, the enforcement of which was grossly neglected, with the inevitable result that there were frequent desertions from the mines. He went on to deal with the question of gold thefts, and to suggest a remedy. His experience on the diamond fields led him to believe that the best way to put a stop to such thefts was by the appointment of a Gold Protection Board, of five members, on the lines of the Diamond Protection Board, which had solved the problem in Griqualand West.

Finally, he urged the necessity of closer and more harmonious contact between the Government, the Legislature, and the people of the Witwatersrand. The President and some of the members of the Volksraad should visit Johannesburg ; he was sure they would be welcomed, and there would be no repetition of the unpleasantness which had greeted a former visit. " I feel confident," he said, " that unless we destroy the barriers which have more or less separated the people from the Government, a feeling of unrest and discontent will continue, and will keep alive an undesirable agitation, not only in the Republic but in the whole of South Africa, as well as in Europe."

Such were, in broad outline, the economic grievances of the mining population. If we add to them the denial of the franchise, and the liability to military service, we have the main counts in the Uitlanders' case against the Republic. In the year 1928, with the memories of the Great War behind us, it may seem strange to us that these grievances should have been held to outweigh even the loathsome abominations of war ; but we must remember that the men of that generation had not the experience of the realities of conflict. Probably no one on either side of the quarrel had an inkling of the miseries to come.

Robinson was closely examined on his evidence. The point that first called for the attention of the commission was the somewhat startling suggestion that the railway should be nationalised. He repeated his opinion, and stoutly upheld it under searching criticism. It was true that the Railway Company would have to be compensated,





Sir Joseph and Lady Robinson and Mr. J. B. Robinson
going to the opening of the Union Parliament with Count
Labia (Italian Minister in South Africa), 1926.

A general view of Hawthornden, Sir Joseph Robinson's
residence at Wynberg, Cape Province.

but the Government would have no difficulty in raising a loan for the purpose. A London syndicate, some eight months ago, had signified its willingness to make a loan to the Republican Government for that very purpose. The Railway would be a valuable asset to the State, and the knowledge that it was the property of the Republic would lead to greatly increased confidence in financial circles. Moreover, if it were public property it could be run in the public interest instead of in the interest of shareholders greedy for dividends, and by a reduction of the railway tariffs, the State could bring about a great expansion of trade within its own territory. It was true that the railway must still be made to pay its way, whether it were owned publicly or privately, but this could still be done even with the reduced tariff that would be made possible by Government ownership. His view was that the State should take possession of the railway in order to use it as an instrument of trade development. It was not suggested that it should be run at a loss and subsidised out of revenue; it was merely contended that if it were in the hands of the State, this would lead to enhanced prosperity and therefore to increased revenue. A Company, on the other hand, was not in a position to take account of such considerations, because its first duty was to its own shareholders. Therefore let the shareholders be compensated, and the Railway become the property of the Republic, and it would follow not only that the Government would possess a tangible asset of great value and of a nature to inspire confidence, but that it would be able to bring about a great increase of prosperity; and moreover, any profits which might accrue would go into the coffers of the State.

He was examined also in some detail upon other points of his evidence: The dynamite monopoly, the Pass Laws, the Liquor Law, the share the mining industry would be prepared to take in bringing down costs. He had worked out the system by which the desired five shillings reduction would be obtained, and showed that under it the share of the Government in the task would amount to two shillings and ninepence per ton, the other two shillings and threepence reduction to be achieved by the industry itself; but this would only be possible if there were a reduction in the cost of living,

Modern Johannesburg.



THE CORNER HOUSE,
at the corner of Commissioner Street and between the chains.

which could be achieved by means of the measures he had advocated. On the question of the reduction of taxation, one of the Commissioners invited his views on the possibility of levying a tax on gold of five shillings an ounce, in place of the existing taxes of which the industry complained—arguing that the mine-owners could merely add the amount of the tax to the price of their product, and the consumer would have to pay it, since the world would have to buy gold at whatever price it might be offered. To this suggestion Robinson objected strongly, pointing out that the economic effects upon the world of so great a rise in the price of gold had not been studied by the author of this pleasing piece of ingenuity.

As this examination was concluded with an inquiry into the policy he had urged of closer contact between the people of the Rand and the members of the Government, he emphatically confirmed his previous view. Many of the difficulties of the situation, he contended, were due to the lack of contact and understanding between the various elements of the State. The regrettable racial feeling, in particular, was in his view largely due to mutual ignorance. Let the President come to Johannesburg and meet them in a friendly way, let the other leaders of the State come likewise and see for themselves what were the grievances of the mining population, let the leading men on both sides encourage a closer contact and a more friendly spirit between the old and the new sections of the population, and there would be an end of the mutual suspicion and distrust which were not only hampering the progress of the Transvaal, but which had spread over the borders and were dividing the races throughout South Africa. To this it was answered that the President was not unwilling to visit Johannesburg, but that a previous visit had been marked by unpleasant incidents, and his part in the proceedings closed.

It has been thought right to give his views on this occasion in some detail, in order to show clearly what was the policy he upheld during the time of crisis. It was, as always, a policy of conciliation and redress of grievances, with the emphasis on economic questions rather than racial ones. Had it been followed, history might have been different. But when we look back from this distance of time

upon the troubles of that period, we can see that for this pacific policy to have succeeded at that period would have been too much to expect. The Commission of Inquiry was not taking its evidence and recording its findings in a political vacuum, but in an atmosphere thickly charged with racial and patriotic passions, with suspicion and resentment, and with the distant rumblings of apparently inevitable war. On the one hand, Kruger held the unalterable belief that England had fomented the Raid, that she was determined to destroy the independence of his country, and that the mining population were partners in the intrigue; so that eventually he came to look upon their complaints as enemy propaganda, and discounted them accordingly. On the other hand, the Uitlanders had come to believe that nothing was to be hoped for from the Republican Government, that it was intriguing for the destruction of British power in South Africa, that they were to be subjected to persecution by reason of their race, and in order to damage English prestige, and that the only solution was by war. The Republic began to arm, and the rumbling on the horizon grew louder.

Hitherto the Chamber of Mines had been split into two sections, of which one, led by Robinson, pursued a policy of peace and conciliation, and attempted to win over the Government to more liberal views, with (as it appeared) some chance of success. The other section was frankly hostile, and had no belief in the possibility of influencing the Government's views. But after the Jameson raid, there was no longer a liberal party in the Republic, nor did there seem to be any hope of its resurrection. The progressive burghers now joined the intransigents, and as the burghers closed their ranks, the Chamber of Mines closed its own. Robinson himself, to his bitter disappointment, saw all hope of conciliation gradually dwindle to nothing, and his section, the Association of Mines, found itself thrown back into the arms of the Chamber. By the end of 1897, punitive taxation which he had striven so hard to avert was nevertheless imposed, in the shape of a tax of five per cent. on mining profits, and the cup of the industry was full. Now the two sections reunited, and the Chamber of Mines, throughout the year 1898, presented to the closed front of the burghers an equally solid phalanx

of potential enmity. The arena was cleared, and the two sets of gladiators eyed each other from their separate corners.

Even now it might have been possible to avert the conflict, and Robinson, in his personal capacity, was indefatigable in his attempts to bridge the gulf between the two parties, but in vain. Kruger and his advisers might have taken warning when they saw how even Robinson, who had proved himself no enemy of the Republic, was driven by their policy into the ranks of their opponents. But they had become so obsessed with the belief that England was plotting war that it was hardly possible for them to look clearly at the actual economic problem which confronted them, nor to draw the obvious moral from his action. The old President himself might have recovered his natural shrewdness had he been left to himself; but there were constantly at his elbow advisers, foreign and homeborn Afrikaners who traded on the ignorance of the great world which was his weak point, who pointed to every fresh complaint as a fresh instance of British propaganda, and confirmed him in the belief that war was inevitable and he must be ready. At the same time they assured him that when war came, he would not fight alone.

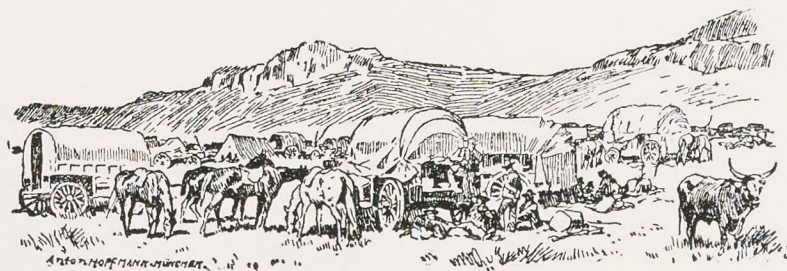


Mr PETERSEN, General Manager
of the Randfontein Estates, 1895.



Mr. CLEMENT WALLACE, Chief
Engineer, Randfontein Estates, 1895.

Some years before, the President of the Transvaal had said to President Jan Brand of the Free State: "Foreigners are swarming into my country. What am I to do with them?" The President of the Free State had answered: "Make them your friends." But Brand, and the policy he stood for, were long since dead; and Reitz, his successor as the head of the Free State, had followed a different plan and entered into an offensive and defensive alliance with the South African Republic. So that when the war came, Kruger could count on one ally in South Africa. But he knew well enough that the Free Staters, brave as they proved to be, even though fighting in a quarrel not their own, could hardly add strength enough to his forces to enable him to meet and overcome a great nation in the field. The truth was that he counted upon foreign intervention. More than one nation of Europe was eager for a share of Africa; and in return for military assistance, the Transvaal might have been able to give them material help in obtaining this. So the question presented itself to his mind, and certain of his advisers carefully



fostered and encouraged the belief. Thus it was that he was prepared to face a war, trusting not only to the Boer genius for defensive warfare, to the skill and courage of his burghers, and the help of the Free State, but to the possibility, if things went against him, of obtaining foreign help. Knowing little of foreign affairs in the wider sphere himself, he trusted his advisers in this matter, and they deceived him, or were themselves deceived. Whoever it was that told him one of the Great Powers would intervene has before the judgment of history a responsibility that none will envy.

At the same time, if his belief in the inevitability of war was exaggerated, it is only fair to point out that it was encouraged by the doings of the Uitlanders quite as much as by his advisers themselves. Fiery speeches, provocative articles by fire-eating journalists, breathing sentiments which in a European state would be instantly denounced as sedition of the most flagrant type, propaganda for British intervention—these things did not make for an attitude of coolness and conciliation. Both sides had now reached a point where war was almost openly envisaged. Probably few on either side had realised that war is not merely a matter of bayonets and bullets, killing and wounding, but that it releases a great flood of emotions and hysterical passions of all kinds, and that when the waters subside they leave a sediment so thick that the features of the landscape are changed. Had they understood this, and realised what a legacy the war would leave, they would have been unceasing in their efforts to maintain peace.

Robinson was one of the few who could appreciate from experience the strength and valour of each of the contending forces—the Boer commandoes and the British Army. He realised that the fire-eaters on both sides did not know, in vulgar parlance, what they were letting themselves in for, and this knowledge, and his intense devotion to South Africa, encouraged him to go forward in his self-imposed task of attempted reconciliation, heart-breaking though he found it.

Now the clouds gathered ever more thickly upon the horizon, and men saw closer than before the lightnings of the coming storm.



The Boer War.



Typical Burghers called up for Commando Service, Oct. 1899.



A Boer Camp on the Natal Front, Oct. 1899.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BOER WAR

In October, 1899, the clouds which had been gathering for so long broke into storm. British troops had been brought from India to Natal, and were massed near the Transvaal frontier in readiness for the conflict that now appeared to be inevitable. The Boers despatched an ultimatum, demanding their withdrawal. As they were on British territory, naturally no reply could be given to such a demand, and on the 11th October, 1899, hostilities were begun.

The history of this period we need not tell, since it has been fully dealt with from many points of view by a great number of other writers, but we quote Robinson's statement of his views on it, given in a speech at a public meeting in London towards the end of 1899.

"You will remember," he said, "that I left here for the Transvaal shortly after the Jameson Raid. My object in returning to the Transvaal was to bring about a better state of things between the Government of the country and the Uitlanders, and to conciliate, if possible, the various interests which were having such a prejudicial effect upon the welfare of every inhabitant of South Africa. I may mention that, some months after my arrival, there was every indication of a change for the better, but I regret to say that after that period matters began to assume a different aspect, and it became quite evident to me that it would be terribly uphill work to achieve the objects that I had in view. However, the first step that I took was to bring about a meeting of all the important elements in Johannesburg and the neighbourhood. With this object in view I convened a meeting at my office, and briefly introduced my view to those who were present at the meeting. The mining, commercial, mercantile, and other interests were all represented at that meeting, and it was decided that a petition should be carefully prepared and presented to the Government of the country and the Volksraad, setting forth the exact position of affairs and suggesting to the Government, in a most friendly manner, what it was that the country wanted ;

and at the same time offering to work with them in terms of friendship and harmony. I am pleased to be able to say that the representative men joined me most willingly in this matter. A committee was appointed to prepare the petition, and I had a good deal to do with the drafting of it.

“Every effort was made to conciliate the Government and the Volksraad, and to extend the hand of friendship to the people of the country. The petition was duly prepared and very numerously signed. A deputation, consisting of all the leading men in Johannesburg, waited upon the Acting Secretary of State, and handed him the petition for presentation to the Volksraad. I may state that the petition was drawn up on very broad lines. There was absolutely nothing to object to in it. It was respectfully worded and contained suggestions that were of incalculable value to the Government of the country. It will no doubt surprise you to learn that, after we had gone to this enormous amount of trouble and expense in getting the petition influentially supported and numerously signed, we heard nothing more about it.

“We however continued our agitation, and the Executive Council appointed a commission for the purpose of investigating the grievances of the Uitlanders and the necessary reforms. The commission was appointed, and consisted of very prominent members of the government of the country. A few advisory members were added, but they had no voting powers. I must do the commission justice by saying that, although when they first took their seats we could see that their views did not harmonise with ours, yet after they had sat for some weeks and taken evidence they began to realise the true position of affairs, and entered into the whole question very fully. For a period of three months the most voluminous evidence was taken. It was shown clearly how inimical to the true interests of the State it was to pursue the policy that had been followed for such a number of years. It was proved how the State's revenue would benefit if proper legislative measures were adopted, and how the whole community, including every burgher of the State, would gain to a great extent by wise and sound legislation.

“The Commission’s report to the Government was favourable to the Uitlanders, and the suggestions it made would have contributed materially to the removal of grievances and to the establishment of a new order of things which would have redounded to the credit of the State, advanced its prosperity, allayed all racial feeling, and brought into unity the various elements which constitute the population of the country. I saw President Kruger several times, and on the occasion of my last visit I understood clearly that he was favourable to the report. I left for my estate near Capetown, and on my return some six weeks afterwards, on questioning him as to when the report would be laid before the Volksraad, he informed me that he could not possibly adopt it.

“Nevertheless, I continued my exertions quietly, and I found that month after month the position grew worse and worse, and I soon realised that it was absolutely hopeless. All arguments based upon solid facts were useless. It was shown over and over again how the revenue of the country would increase, and how absolutely necessary it was to afford facilities for a proper supply of labour, as well as to diminish the great evil of illicit liquor dealing amongst the natives. Two hundred mines were shut down and could not be worked. It was proved clearly that there were millions that would be spent in the country if those mines could be worked, and made to pay even a small profit, as it must not be forgotten that nearly two-thirds of the value of gold won in a mine is spent and circulated in the Transvaal. Instead of viewing these economic questions in a proper light they were tabooed; and as a result we found that, in addition to the burdens which were then hampering the development of the country, additional taxation was imposed which made those burdens greater, and increased the unrest and bitter feeling which were doing so much harm throughout the whole of South Africa.

“We know what followed, and subsequent events in connection with other matters brought the people to such a state that it became impossible to stem the excitement and bring about a better feeling. All this time I saw clearly what would happen. At many of my



Sir Alfred (later the Right Hon. Viscount) Milner, K.G., G.C.M.G., G.C.B.,
H.M. High Commissioner for South Africa, 1889-1902.

interviews with President Kruger I endeavoured by all the means in my power to impress him with the urgency of taking steps to allay this excitement, and do something which would satisfy the country. All these efforts were in vain. There was a coterie in Pretoria who did not leave a stone unturned to induce the Government to continue its policy, and set all representations made at defiance.

“ I would like to say a few words with regard to the views of Sir Alfred Milner. I had an interview of two hours' duration with the Governor a few months before I left South Africa, and I may say that during the whole of that interview Sir Alfred showed clearly that he was trying to find some plan by which he could bring rest to South Africa in a peaceable and conciliatory manner. He impressed me very much with his anxiety to settle the affairs of the country in a friendly way, and not at any time during the whole interview did Sir Alfred, in any shape or form, convey to my mind that there was the least desire on his part to see a rupture in the country. On the contrary his whole conversation and questions were directed to a peaceable solution of the unrest and race feeling throughout the country. In fairness to the High Commissioner I wish to record the deep impression he made on my mind during the interview of the impartial manner in which he was striving to find a way to settle South African questions on a fair and equitable basis.

“ There is a great deal being said now about this present war in the Transvaal, and that it has been brought about by capitalists. Now I think you will do me justice to admit that I have never yet been mixed up with any capitalists, or with any movement in any direction whatever. I have never attempted to obtain from the Government of the Transvaal any concession or monopoly, but have persistently opposed the granting of them ; and have pointed out to the authorities, in most forcible language, that by the granting of these concessions and monopolies they were injuring the future prospects of their country and tapping its life-blood. I have never sought a favour at their hands. I have never attempted to injure the South African Republic. On the contrary I have at all times assisted them in the hour of need, and I have conscientiously done my utmost to induce them to see eye to eye with the Uitlanders

and to meet the latter on a fair basis, so that peace could be established and harmony should prevail, and the interests of the country be advanced in every possible way.

“Of this I feel sure : if war could have been avoided, and a satisfactory settlement arrived at, there would have been great rejoicing amongst the bulk of the Uitlander population ; but it was quite evident from the negotiations that no substantial settlement could take place, and to enter into a fictitious agreement would only have led to greater trouble in the future.”

A year later, he again reviewed the course of events in South Africa in a similar speech. But more interesting is an article signed J.B. Robinson, which appeared in the “Contemporary Review” for October, 1900. This article aroused widespread interest, both on account of the prominent position of its author and his acknowledged standing as an authority upon all South African affairs, and on account of the original views which it expressed.

It was widely quoted in the English Press, and also translated into foreign languages and quoted at some length by Continental papers. In it he began by urging that the policy to be followed should be large, generous and statesmanlike. There should be no confiscation of the lands of the burghers, and ultimately, though not at once, the suffrage should be granted.

“I should go further,” he went on, “in fact ; though not as a matter of offer. There will have to be in the Transvaal, as also in the Orange River Colony, a Lieutenant-Governor (acting under the High Commissioner) and an Executive Council ; and both States will have to remain Crown Colonies for a certain period ; unless, indeed, the two be administered as a single Crown Colony, which would be better. The Executive Council should consist of about twelve members, and it would be wisdom to offer four or five out of the twelve seats to the Boers. They might elect their own representatives, and the remaining seven would be nominees of the Imperial Government (advised, no doubt, in their selection by the

loyalists in South Africa), who might be relied upon to insist upon an enlightened system of administration.

“As to the four or five seats to be offered to the Dutch, I should not hesitate to offer them to Botha, De Wet, and other prominent men. Indeed, one of our greatest dangers for the future is lest the Government of these new Colonies should fail, as the Government of the Transvaal failed in 1880, for want of knowledge of the people of South Africa. It is common enough for Englishmen and Colonists, to suppose that they understand the Dutch population. After a war of conquest it is frequently imagined that it matters but little whether the people are understood or not. Military Government may be necessary for a brief period. It should, however, be very brief, for in military government it is not necessary to understand the governed.

“It is a system of order, not of justice—a state of siege; but when this transitory regime is over, it will be of the first importance not only to understand what the Dutch want, but so to act that when they realise that they are not set aside, but that they form a part of the subjects of a country ruled and governed on equitable lines, they will appreciate the position and fall into line with the general population. This will remove that seditious mode of expression and appeal which has done so much harm throughout South Africa; and, in the absence of such an arrangement, we shall run the greatest hazards that the needs and wishes of the Boer population may be either unknown or ignored. Racial feeling would then run very high, whereas the institutions established by the Imperial Government to rule the country must give protection against abuses, and establish on a permanent basis a feeling of confidence amongst the people who inhabit the South African Colonies.

“South Africa is not only a country of surprises, but it has at all times exercised a most powerful influence upon men who have gone there with high reputations to take part in the administration of its affairs. South Africa has been justly said to be the grave of reputations. Men who have been greatly esteemed, and who have been possessed of the highest abilities, have been sent there, and

have failed in the part they have played in the government of the country. The reason is not far to seek. It is on account of the peculiar constitution of the people of South Africa, and one of the strongest causes to make them fail in their efforts is that they have not understood the character and habits of thought of the men over whom they have been called to exercise authority. The problem that we have to solve is an easy one, but it requires tact, judgment, courtesy and good feeling. There is no easier race to govern than the Dutch in South Africa. We have seen this both in the Cape Colony and Natal, and if we are guided by right principles in the government that we propose to establish in the two Republics which have now been annexed by Great Britain, we shall very soon eradicate all racial animosity, and thoroughly destroy the pernicious influence of those who are seeking to undermine British supremacy in South Africa. Unity of races is the first object to be sought. South Africa is destined to become a great country. It is the country of the future, and as time progresses its marvellous developments will astonish the world. Great Britain has now a chance of establishing a government upon a basis that will be sufficiently strong, capable, and generous in the exercise of its power to conciliate all the conflicting interests, to bring them into harmony, and to establish a power in South Africa which will be of material assistance to the mother country in any future attempt to assail her position.

“ In this view, it is of the greatest importance to secure not only that the Dutch population of the Vaal and Orange Colonies shall be effectively represented on the Executive, but that the remaining members of the Council be able and wisely chosen men. Some of them will, no doubt, be leading local men ; there is plenty of material. The vast commercial interests in the Transvaal have produced a number of men accustomed to handle both private and public business with practical ability, and in a large and Imperial spirit. Others may be sent from England, and it is here perhaps that there is the greatest danger, lest, when it comes to Government patronage for important positions, social or political reasons should warp the judgment of Her Majesty's Government. It is of no use to pretend that such influences do not exist, or can be neglected. But in this

case the task on hand is so weighty that we may hope they will be unable to act in the tense air of a critical situation.

“ It is my opinion that few men in England have any adequate conception of the future importance of South Africa or of the tremendous significance for the Empire of the settlement now to be made. We are not tossing up a paper constitution to last for a few years and tide over an awkward moment ; we are laying the political foundations of a continent which will be the keystone of the arch of our Empire. The resources of the Transvaal are endless. It is seamed with rich minerals of every kind. Its population, under a modern administration, will go up by leaps and bounds. It may well be in population, wealth and commerce our premier colony. Certainly the Vaal Colony will lead South Africa. Johannesburg is now the capital of South Africa and such it will remain, while its trade with England will shortly become a mainstay of our home prosperity. What we are doing we must do well, and so build as to endure. Let us throw away all paltry, personal, and even racial considerations, and appoint to initiate its Government men who will know how to construct, on the basis of two able races, a great and permanent commercial State.

“ In suggesting that places in the Executive Government should be offered to some Boers of mark, I am not relying on the idea of a generous recoil of feeling on the part of the Boers ; it is not the sentiment of gratitude, but of justice, of open fair-play, which has power in politics. But in politics, as in private life, there is no mode of treating a person whom you have had to thwart, and who detests you, so foolish as to return his hatred. You are not bound to place in his hands the power to overcome you ; but to stamp on him is to stamp in his resentment and to betray your own fear.”

A view of President Kruger which is worth quoting is also expressed in this article :—

“ Mr. Kruger is a very long-headed man, perhaps the ablest man of his generation in any country. Given a good education and I do not think he could be matched. He has always struck me as



Lady Robinson at a Fancy Dress Ball at Dudley House.

Napoleonic in his brain-power ; the other Boers are pygmies beside him. He worked his diplomacy like a master, and outwitted us, not once or twice. If he had not been over-persuaded into the ultimatum, and I know that his judgment was against it, he would have won his game.

“ Had he simply protracted negotiations, yielded a little and watched the board, it would have taken more strength than the Home Government possessed to resist the English feeling against stamping out two free Republics, to declare war and invade the Transvaal. The ultimatum changed everything, and it was the foreigners about him and the Foreign press, with their false assurances of European intervention, who, catching Mr. Kruger on his weak side—his ignorance of the world—drove him into the challenge of war. I think he must have bitterly regretted it.”

Robinson went on to deal at some length with the scandal of the illicit sale of liquor to natives on the Rand and with the question of concessions. It had been suggested that the Transvaal should be made to pay part of the cost of the war. To this he objected, both on this and on other occasions, clearly pointing out the enormous value of the opening up of the rich Transvaal trade to Great Britain, the effect of which would in itself be ample to pay for the war many times over. If special taxes were imposed on the mines for the purpose, the result would be that many of the lower grade mines would be forced to close down. It was commonly believed that an increase in costs of production amounting only to a few shillings a ton could make no serious difference to an industry concerned with a product of such enormous value as Gold ; but, as he pointed out, the argument overlooked the fact that many of the gold mines were run at a very narrow margin of profit, and to them a few shillings per ton would make all the difference in the world. The greater number of the Rand mines were not of a particularly high grade, so that an attack upon the low-grade properties would result in a state of crisis in South Africa.

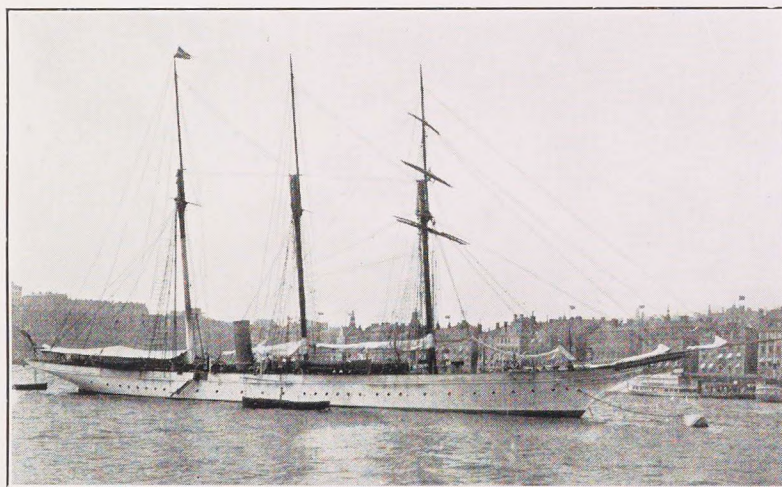
He had expressed similar views from time to time as opportunity arose. But as the war drew to a close, he began to feel the strain,



A Royal Visitor for "La Belle Sauvage."

From "The Moon" Johannesburg, 1898.

and when Peace was at length declared, he set off for a cruise in the Mediterranean. He was fond of yachting, and had acquired a very fine auxiliary steam yacht of some 700 tons, named *La Belle Sauvage*. In this beautiful vessel, accompanied by his family, he made several cruises in 1902 and succeeding years, in the course of which he voyaged to the Mediterranean and the Baltic, as far as Russia. The beautiful vessel was well known, and her owner heartily welcomed, in most of the ports of those waters. The late King Edward VII. was a frequent visitor to the ship, and spent many happy hours on board. After her career as a pleasure yacht, *La Belle Sauvage* was detailed for sterner duties, and was taken up by the Admiralty during the Great war.



The Famous Steam Yacht "La Belle Sauvage" 700 tons.



When General Botha was Feted in London on his Arrival in 1907.

From the "Johannesburg Star" 1907.

CHAPTER XII.

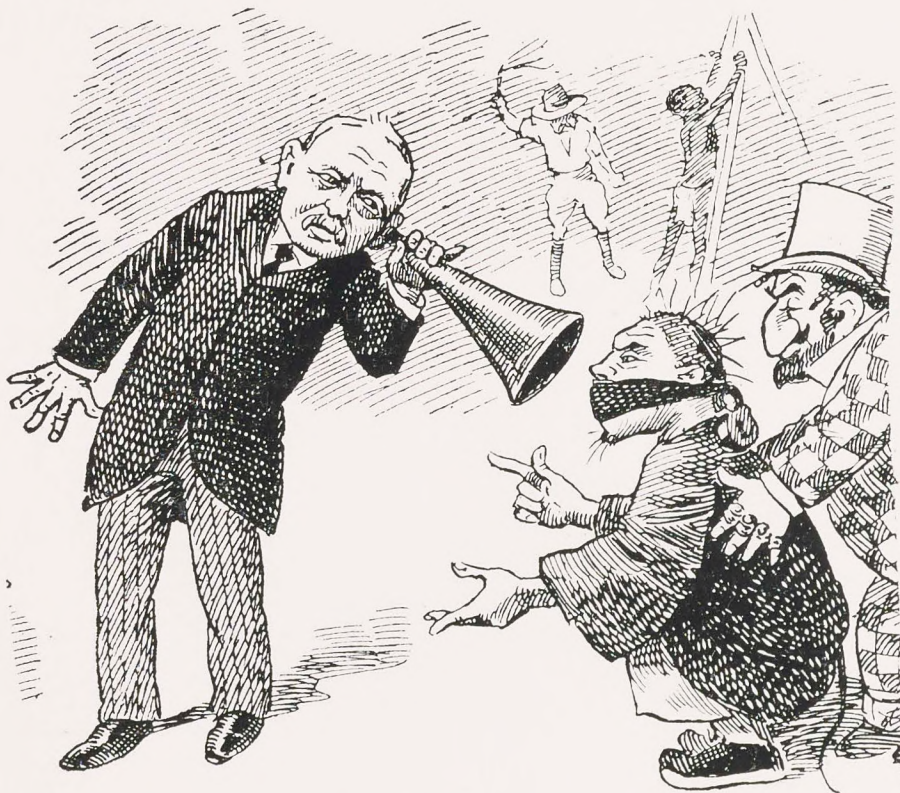
RESPONSIBLE GOVERNMENT AND CHINESE LABOUR

It will be remembered that even during the Boer War, Robinson had publicly advocated a policy of conciliation towards the Boers, in the article in the *Contemporary Review* which has been previously dealt with. He was called a pro-Boer, not for the first time nor the last, but the true key to his policy is to be found in the simple fact that he was a South African, and therefore concerned himself with the question of what was best for South Africa as a whole, and what would lead to permanent peace between the races. He favoured a policy of conciliation, as he had done all his life, and he refused to lose his head and shout with the mob for a vengeance that would have left the old wound unhealed. For this reason, he found that his advice was sought by the Liberal Party, which was coming round to the same view.

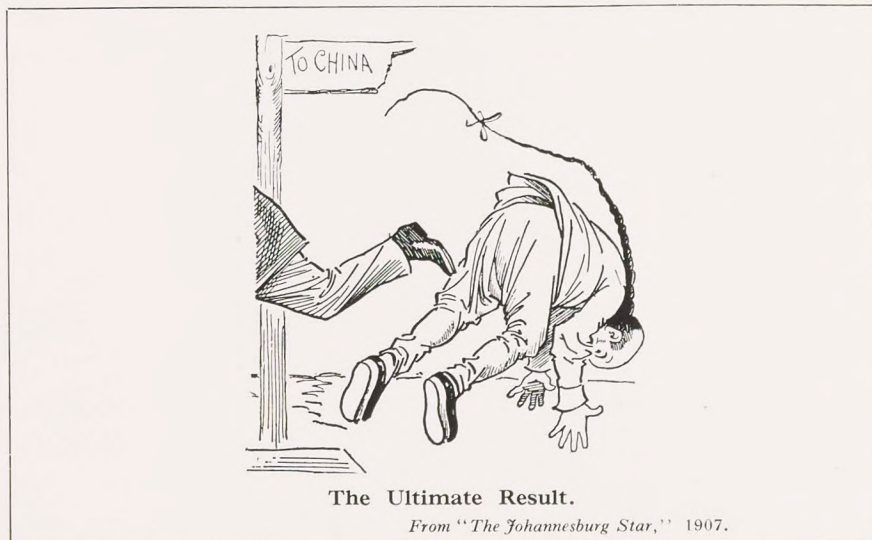
The British General Election of 1906, it will be remembered, was fought upon a South African question. After the war, the natives who had formerly provided the native labour supply of the Rand mines were no longer willing to come to Johannesburg, and alternative sources of labour were looked for. An agreement was entered into between the Governor of the Transvaal and the authorities of Portuguese East Africa, which was called a *modus vivendi*, and which, in return for railway concessions, gave to a body called the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association the sole right to recruit native labour in Portuguese territory. But this did not meet the difficulty, and the continuing shortage of labour was met by permitting the mine-owners (under the title of Chamber of Mines Labour Importation Agency) to import Chinese labourers under a three years' contract.

This Chinese labour policy was unpopular in South Africa, where it was felt that the existing variety of races provided a problem difficult enough, and the addition of another was merely to introduce an unnecessary complication into an already complex problem. It was unpopular in England also, though for somewhat different

The Chinese Labour Crisis in the Transvaal.



Sir Joseph Robinson is invited to enquire into the matter.

From "The Owl," Capetown, 1906.

The Ultimate Result.

From "The Johannesburg Star," 1907.

reasons. The method of recruitment was denounced in fiery speeches, accusations of ill treatment of the Chinese were freely made, and the Liberal Party fought and won the election on the cry of "Chinese Slavery!" The Liberals were accused of saying the thing which was not; and they confessed that certain "terminological inexactitudes" had in fact made their appearance in the campaign.

The gifted young author of that famous phrase, Mr. Winston Churchill, now obtained his first Ministerial post, that of Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies. Robinson had watched him with interest and marked him out as one who would go far in his profession. He was anxious to see Mr. Churchill succeed; he was anxious also for the success of the Liberal Government, which he had greatly helped in its campaign. But it was one thing to fulminate against Chinese slavery in the cool shadow of opposition, and quite another to abolish it under the cold light of office. Robinson had interviews with Lord Elgin, the Colonial Secretary, and Mr. Churchill, and he devoted intense thought to the problem.

The objection that was raised to the repatriation of the Chinese was that this would lead to an economic crisis, because there would be a shortage of labour so extreme as to cause many of the mines to close down. Native labour, it was held, was not available to replace the Chinese. White labour was out of the question. Therefore the Chinese were a necessity. Yet the Government was pledged to repatriate them; had indeed come into power on that very pledge. What was to be done?

Robinson determined to find the solution. After a careful examination of the whole position, he saw that the weak point in the argument was that the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, the very body which, under another name, was importing and employing the Chinese, had the monopoly of recruiting in Portuguese East Africa. Now the employers who looked at the question from the purely economic point of view preferred the Chinese to the natives, because they were vastly more efficient—being intelligent, civilised men, while the natives were raw barbarians—and also because they were imported under a three years contract, whereas that of the natives

from Portuguese territory was for one year only. Therefore it was to the interest of these employers to contend that the Chinese were necessary to the mines, and to declare that native labour was not available ; and since they had the monopoly of recruiting the natives concerned, there was no means of disproving their assertions in the matter.

In this difficulty, Robinson came to the conclusion that the only solution was to break the monopoly. He therefore laid his views before the Ministry in London, and had several talks with Lord Elgin, the Colonial Secretary, upon the subject. If the British Government would obtain through diplomatic channels permission for him to recruit labour in Portuguese East Africa, Robinson undertook that he would give practical proof that the Chinese were unnecessary. This plan was eagerly welcomed by Lord Elgin and Mr. Churchill. The necessary machinery was set in motion, and the Portuguese authorities were persuaded to grant Robinson a licence enabling him to recruit labour in their territory in Africa. He promptly set out for the Transvaal.

Meanwhile the great gift of Responsible Government had, as Robinson had urged, been granted to the two ex-Republics, and a general election took place. In this election Robinson gave considerable assistance to Het Volk Party, to which Generals Botha and Smuts belonged. He never made any secret of this action, which was the natural outcome of his belief in conciliation, but which inevitably led to his being described as a pro-Boer by people who had overlooked the fact that the Treaty of Vereeniging rendered such a cry obsolete. Moreover, for the mining interest to stand out as the arch-enemy of a policy of conciliation and the great champion of an ideal of dominance and subjection, was not a prospect that commended itself to his mind. Accordingly, he supported the Botha-Smuts combination, while most of the other magnates took the opposite course. So valuable was his help, and so much importance was attached to his opinion, that after the election the leaders of the victorious party approached him when the Premier was to be selected. The party chiefs had already made their selection

privately, but they approached Robinson as an act of courtesy and a mark of gratitude for the help he had given them. He interpreted their action correctly, but since his advice had been asked, he gave it. He had followed the career of both men, and he was impressed by the brilliant intellect of General Smuts, whom he therefore suggested as the best candidate for the Premiership. The party chiefs, however, pointed out to him the respect and affection in which Botha was held among the people, and he agreed that he had been mistaken and that Botha was the right choice.

The Government was pledged to the immediate abolition of Chinese labour, and its members enthusiastically welcomed Robinson's plan. He set to work at once. Energetically beginning recruiting operations in Portuguese East Africa, through his agents, he was very soon able to prove that native labour was to be obtained there in quantities quite sufficient to render the Chinese unnecessary and to make their repatriation possible. Before long there was no longer a Chinese labour question, for it was apparent to all that it would be perfectly feasible to replace them by natives.

Soon after this, he entered into negotiations with the other employers, and finally agreed to merge his licence with that held by the Witwatersrand Native Labour Association, on condition that that body altered its constitution so far as to make it necessary that decisions on important points should be unanimous instead of by majority, as had been the previous custom. The effect of this reform was to protect the interests of the smaller mines, by preventing the over-riding of their views by the larger concerns.

The much-threatened shortage of native labour never reached proportions that seriously threatened the industry. As is well known, the gold-mining industry has gained considerably in magnitude since the repatriation of the Chinese. The disasters that were prophesied as certain to follow on the abolition of Chinese labour never materialised. Instead, the industry took on a new lease of life shortly afterwards, with results to South Africa the benefits of which need no description.



The Right Hon. General Louis Botha, P.C.

From a Photo by Leo Weinthal, London, 1907.

Robinson's part in this crisis was perhaps a more difficult one than that of any other man. For the efforts of others were confined to the public platform and the council chamber, whereas it was left to his intelligence and driving force to seek for, find, and apply the remedy in the sphere of practical life. For his part in this, for his work for Responsible Government, and for the whole record of an already long life, he was urged by General Botha to accept a Baronetcy. This he declined. But when the offer was renewed a year later, he held it discourteous to refuse any longer, and soon the old pioneer became known by the style and title of Sir Joseph Robinson, Bart.

Before leaving this question, it may not be out of place to explain a little more clearly the South African view of Chinese labour. All problems in South Africa lead sooner or later to the master-problem known as the Native Question. This question presents itself to citizens of the Union in the very simple form: is the European or the Bantu system to prevail in Africa? Now for three centuries past the South Africans have been building up a European state, governed by European ideals, and based upon a European population, small, indeed, but much larger than that of any other territory in Africa. In order to preserve their ideals, they have held it necessary to draw a rigid line of demarcation between themselves and the natives, and on many occasions in the past they have made great sacrifices to preserve this line and have even been willing to maintain it with their lives. The native is not to be treated with injustice in his own sphere, but the European sphere is to be held inviolate; otherwise, it is believed, the European would necessarily degenerate. And the existence on the border of the Union of a state where the opposite policy is followed does not lead the South African to change his view, for he finds the achievements of that state in many ways inferior to his own. It is not because the native is black that the bar exists; it is because he is a barbarian and because his character and ideals are utterly different from those of the white man.

So long as the question retains its simplicity, there is hope of a solution that will be fair to both races. So long, that is, as the European ideal and the Bantu ideal confront each other, it may well be possible to preserve both. But if another race, having its own

tradition and its own ideal, be introduced, the difficulty will be enormously increased. In old times, members of a number of Eastern races were introduced to the Cape as slaves, and their descendants now form the race called the Cape Coloured people. But these people have long since forgotten their origins, adopted the white man's languages, and striven, so far as they are able, to live in the European style. They have thus adopted the European ideal, and consequently, when the native question is discussed, the Cape Coloured are considered as allies of the Europeans. Thus in the Native Bills which are to be laid before the Union Parliament during the present session, the Cape Coloured are to receive all the rights and privileges of Europeans. On the other hand, the Indians who were imported into Natal during the nineteenth century to work upon the sugar plantations, have not adopted the European ideals, and consequently they are ranked with the natives; not because there is any similarity, but because it is necessary to preserve the clear distinction between the European ideal on the one hand, and the non-European ideal of all kinds on the other.

Now if the Chinese had been permitted to remain, we must suppose that they would have propagated their kind, that in the course of time a Chinese population would have arisen in South Africa, and that it would have been unwilling to forsake its ancient and distinguished culture and to adopt a style of living which the Chinese consider barbarous. Therefore they would have had to be classed as upholders of the non-European ideal, and they would have lent additional strength to that section of the population. A race the most hopelessly alien of all races on earth, it is not to be supposed that they could ever have been absorbed into the ranks of white or coloured. And their very civilisation itself would have added to the difficulty of their absorption. They would not have abandoned their traditions, for their traditions are worth preserving, and the consequence would have been a problem by this time the most acute of any in Africa. There is also to be considered the fact that the natives are usually fairly good workers, that they spend their money in Africa, and that their employment on the mines has greatly increased the wealth and purchasing power of African tribes, thus raising them

in the scale of civilisation. This could not have taken place to anything like the same extent had the Chinese taken their place. For these reasons the man who put an end to the vicious system of Chinese labour is deserving of the gratitude of all South Africans, and this is now generally acknowledged.

Two or three years after the conclusion of the Boer War, Mr. Lyttelton, the Conservative Colonial Secretary, brought out a Constitution conferring Representative Government on the Transvaal and Orange Free State. As the name implies, this Constitution stopped short of full Responsible Government. Half the members of Parliament would be nominated by the High Commissioner in consultation with the Imperial Government, and only the other half would be elected.

Sir Joseph Robinson did not like this half measure, and said so. Before this Constitution could be brought into operation, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman came into power, and, owing much to Sir Joseph for the success of the Liberal Party at the General Election—he consulted him in regard to the suppression or otherwise of this Constitution. There were in fact numerous consultations.

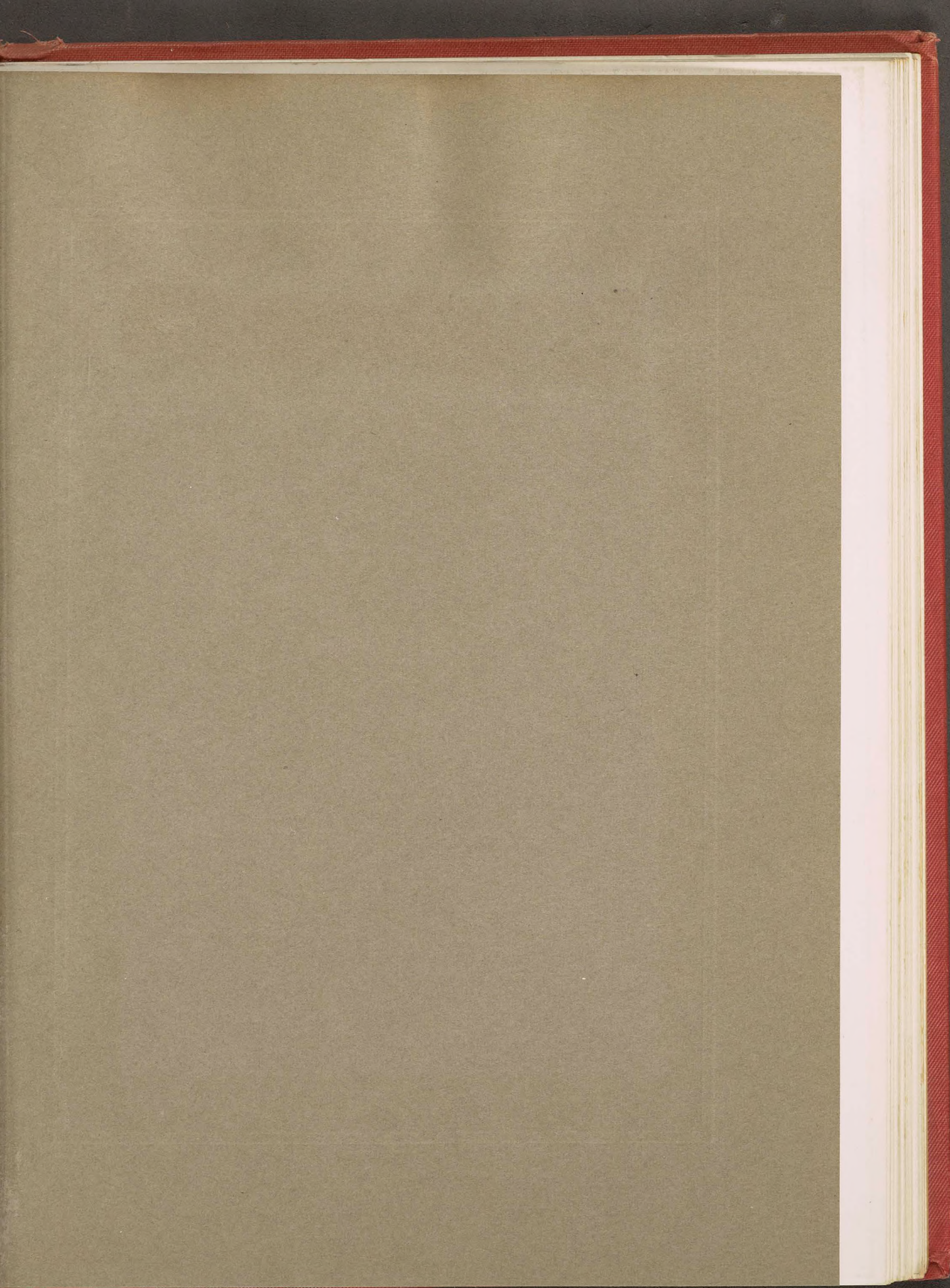
Sir Joseph strongly advocated that a full and complete measure of Responsible Government be conferred on the Transvaal and O.F.S. forthwith, and the arguments he adduced in favour of this magnanimous course persuaded the Liberal Premier to go ahead with his policy of trusting Britain's former enemies—with benefits that the whole world now acknowledges.

It is now commonly admitted that Robinson was right in his views on this subject, in spite of all the opposition at the time. He was called a "Pro-Boer" for his work in this connection: a term which was not only untrue, but which was highly inappropriate at a time when the Boers were British subjects, living at peace with their English fellow-citizens. That he was right in recommending the grant of Self-Government, and that Campbell-Bannerman was right in following his advice, was amply proved by the events of 1914. Had the Lyttelton Constitution, with all its irritating restrictions,

been in force at that time, and had the Boers been treated as a subject race, there cannot be the slightest doubt that the outbreak of the world-conflict in August, 1914, would have been the signal for a serious civil war in South Africa, far greater and more dangerous than any previous combat in that country, and not so easily suppressed as De Wet's rebellion, which would not only have prevented the sending of South African contingents to the various fronts, but which might well have required the help of Imperial troops to suppress it, at a time when every man was needed upon the battlefields of France and Flanders.

At the time when Robinson—still Mr. J. B. Robinson—arrived in Johannesburg, he found the Rand in the grip of one of its recurrent crises, and great masses of unemployed parading the streets and demanding work. These miners were mostly English, for the time had not yet come when the Dutch of the poorer classes were to take to work underground, and most mining operations were still carried on by Cornishmen—most of whom have now left the country. The unemployed were naturally suffering severely, not only from the want of work, but from the high prices prevailing. They set up a camp outside the town, where they pitched their tents, and appealed to the magnates for help. This appeal, for the most part, fell on stony ground; but when Robinson was approached, he at once recognised that the grievances of the men were justified, and he promptly wrote out a cheque for five thousand pounds, and handed it to their leaders. A little later, he was again approached, and this time he gave them a second five thousand pounds. He also made a point of finding work for as many of the men as his companies could possibly absorb, and also made his influence felt in other ways in the amelioration of their position.

Here we might add that Robinson, throughout his career, made it a point of honour to be what is known as a good employer. He was the first to introduce the eight-hour day in the Transvaal, though his example was quickly followed by others. In the early days of mining, various rough and ready systems of labour regulation had been in force. But when the industry developed and settled down into a regular and permanent system of production, the Trade Unions





SIR JOSEPH and LADY ROBINSON, 1928.

naturally developed with it, and a more definite set of regulations was evolved for the working of the mines. The system ultimately reached, though it has not prevented grave and even sanguinary disturbances, is now one of the most liberal and efficient in existence. Robinson was concerned with this, as with all other developments in the industry, and was firmly on the side of fair treatment for the workers. He was responsible, as we have said, for the eight-hour day, as for the introduction of other reforms in the working of the mines ; and in times of trouble and hardship, he proved himself a friend of the workers, as instanced by this gift of ten thousand pounds. In most such cases, however, he would not allow his name to be published ; and people seeing that his name did not appear in the lists of donors, but merely that large sums were acknowledged from an anonymous source, imagined that he had not subscribed, and were curious as to the reason. In different circumstances, this policy of reserve, which he followed, not from any very definite plan, but because it was in accordance with his nature, might have been a wise one. But where many people were on the look-out for a handle against him, it certainly lent itself to a good deal of misrepresentation.

After the elections, Robinson returned for a short time to his house in London. It was now his custom to spend some months of his time in London, returning to the Transvaal at frequent intervals until he finally retired from business at the end of 1916, being then 76 years of age. He then took up his residence permanently at Hawthornden house, at Wynberg, near Capetown, where he has lived ever since, except for a few short visits to London.

An Interesting Group, 1910, at the Cape
Town University.



The late Right Hon. General Louis Botha. The Right Hon. General J. C. Smuts, and the late Right Hon. John X. Merriman, M.L.A., who was one of the first Managing Directors of the Langlaagte Estate Gold Mines at Johannesburg in 1889.

CHAPTER XIII.

FROM UNION

By the year 1908 the coming Union of South Africa had already thrown its shadow before it. Various schemes for unifying the different Colonies were eagerly canvassed, as they had been in the days of Lord Carnarvon and Mr. Froude, but this time with a difference ; for now the Union Jack floated over the whole of South Africa, and moreover a race of statesmen had arisen who had come to look upon the matter in a very different light from their colleagues of earlier days. Difficulties, indeed, there still were, but the omens were favourable, and the plans of Union aroused a keen and hopeful interest. There were, in fact, two schemes : the one of unification, the other of federation, on the relative merits of which opinion was sharply divided.

During this time Sir Joseph visited England, where his views were eagerly sought by those organs of public opinion which were particularly interested in South African affairs. He gave an interview on the subject to a representative of "The African World," which appeared in that paper's issue of the 11th July, 1908.

After referring to the appointment of members of the National Convention, he said : " A country like South Africa, which is sparsely populated, cannot remain broken up into several small States, as at the present time. There are so many important questions connected with finance, as well as with the political outlook, that the people of the country must be brought together so that they may work out their own destiny, and at the same time place the country in a sound financial position. These views have been expressed very forcibly from time to time, and there can be no question that if unification can be brought about it will strengthen the position of the whole of South Africa, both financially and politically."

As there was at the time much controversy as to whether federation or unification was to be preferred, Sir Joseph was invited to express his views on the subject. He replied : " I am particularly anxious

to see unification carried. I do not believe in federation. There will not be much gained if the states are federated. At the present time the country is over-governed. There are too many Governments in the country, and their interests naturally clash.

“ Questions arise from time to time in connection with Customs, railway tariffs, and various other important measures. These measures are of much importance to the States, and so long as the latter are separated they are unable to work unanimously together, with a view to improving the position.

“ Under one central Government all these difficulties will be removed. There will be great economy, and financially a Dominion of South Africa will become strong, and the public debt with which the several States are now burdened can be consolidated at a very low rate of interest.”

Asked what progress was being made with anti-racial sentiment, he answered : “ I have already explained that racialism is gradually dying out, and if we could only unify the States and bring the people together under one central Government, the racial feeling remaining from the war would soon be entirely swept away. Both nationalities now recognise that to be antagonistic will only retard South African interests. There is a very strong desire to set aside all ill-feeling. Responsible Government has in a great measure brought about this better understanding between the two nationalities. The Cape, the Transvaal, and the Orange River Colonies, as well as Natal, are most desirous of working together—a state of good feeling which will influence very largely the future of South Africa. It is our own duty as British subjects to assist and strengthen these good intentions to the utmost. It is a great mistake to be constantly referring with a feeling of bitterness to measures which are being carried through in the country. It merely provokes the people and can do no possible good.

“ What is most required to advance the interests of South Africa is that attention should be devoted to its domestic affairs, and that party politics should be set aside. Not only is the country over-

governed, but there is too much of politics throughout the country. Until this is stopped, it will tend to retard progress and development."

In another interview, which he gave to the London weekly "South Africa," in the same week, he was asked the question: "Unification should do much towards reducing racial animosity?"

"Certainly," he replied. "That is the great object I have in view. I am leaving again for South Africa in September, as I am particularly anxious about this question. I am going out to assist as much as possible in trying to bring it about."

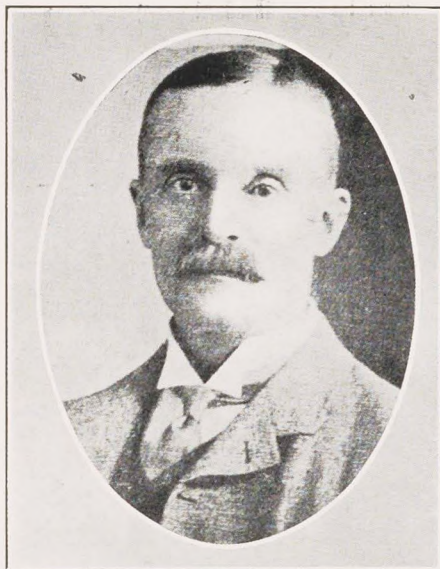
"Will you be in Natal when the Convention is held?"

"No, but I have seen the Prime Minister of Natal and some members of the executive. I met them in Cape Town, where they were attending the Conference. I have known Mr. Moor for many years. We were quite boys when first we met. I also saw Mr. Fischer, the Prime Minister of the Orange River Colony. They all seemed favourably inclined towards unification, and were anxious that some steps should be taken."

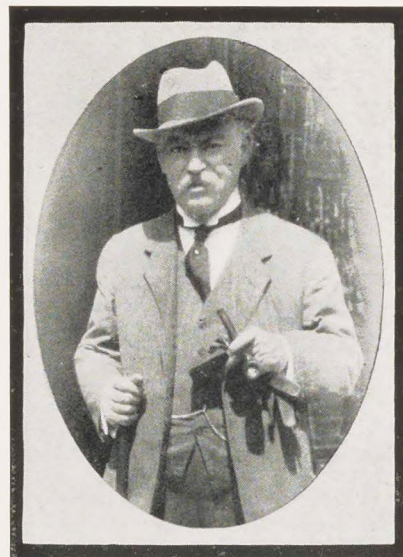
"They will all be glad to have the benefit of your very long experience in South African matters?"

"I don't say that. They are all experienced men, but the more assistance you can get in a matter of this kind the more advantageous it will be. We have very able men in South Africa. We have very good men in Natal, the Cape Colony, the Orange River Colony, and the Transvaal. I think it is the duty of everyone who has an interest in the country to assist as much as possible in a measure which will tend to improve matters throughout the whole of South Africa."

Sir Joseph had been intimately concerned with Transvaal politics for some years past, and had materially helped the Government in several matters, perhaps the chief of which was the drafting of the Gold Law. He now returned to South Africa to give his assistance once more in the great task of bringing about the unification



Mr. J. W. Stubbs,
General Manager Randfontein Estates
Gold Mines.



Mr. Richard Lilienfeld,
A well-known Director and principal
Johannesburg Broker of the Robin-
son group:



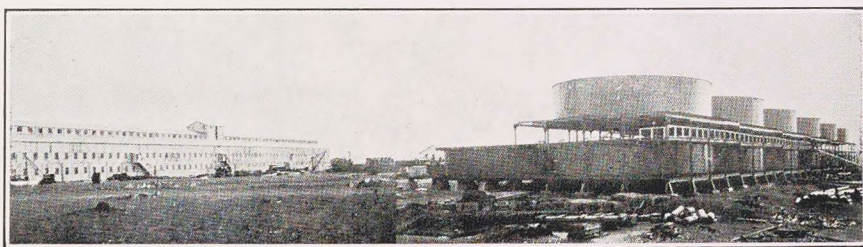
The well-known 3 mile Aerial Gear from Langlaagte Block B mine to
the Langlaagte Estate Mill.

of South Africa. The labours of the Convention were crowned with success, and the new state took her place in the family of nations on the 31st May, 1910.

Meanwhile Robinson had also devoted much time and labour to developing his mines on the West Rand. Afterwards he returned to England for a short time, but he was back in Johannesburg in 1912, whither he had again been summoned by the necessities of his mines for his personal supervision. Such an alternation of visits to England and to Johannesburg would have been the normal course of his life, had not the shattering events of 1914 wrought a change in the plan.

In the early part of the Great War, Robinson naturally preferred to remain in England. Three of his sons were serving in the British Army, and he had a natural wish to be near the scene of action. Mindful of South African affairs, however, he cabled eight thousand pounds to General Botha for distribution among the loyalists and their families who had suffered in the Rebellion or the South-West Africa campaign. But early in 1915, the critical state of things demanded his presence on the Rand, and he sailed for South Africa accordingly.

Arrived in Johannesburg, he worked night and day to put his mines—Langlaagte and Randfontein—on a sound basis, and at length succeeded. His capacity for long, arduous, and unceasing work was little short of amazing in a man of his years ; and he stood the strain magnificently.



The greatest Battery on the Rand (800 stamps) and Cyanide works on the Randfontein Estate.



Mr. J. B. ROBINSON,
Sir Joseph Robinson's Heir.

As if this were not enough, he was invited to stand for Parliament for the constituency of Randfontein. This invitation he declined. Subsequently his son, Mr. J. B. Robinson, jun., was invited to stand as an Independent, and consented. Sir Joseph addressed many of his son's meetings, with great point and vigour, and in a style that showed he had lost none of that marked gift for oratory which had rallied the diggers of Kimberley to his cause and surprised the Cape Parliament more than thirty years before. In these speeches he showed himself a staunch supporter of the Allied cause and an



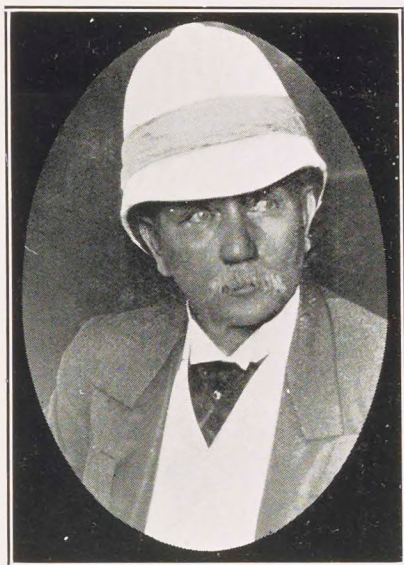
At the Randfontein Election—A Scene after Mr. J. B. Robinson's Victory.

unwavering upholder of the British connection in South Africa. In the years before this he had spoken but rarely. This succession of electioneering speeches, therefore, was something of an event, and created widespread interest. The result of the campaign was that his son was elected by a large majority over the two other candidates.

But this was Sir Joseph's last appearance upon the public platform. He had seen the greater part of his life's ambitions fulfilled : South Africa a united nation, the policy of conciliation triumphant, and a Boer General leading armies to the help of Great Britain. For his mines, he had worked night and day to establish them on a secure foundation, and by the end of 1916 he had brought this task to a successful conclusion. Now at length he began to think of rest. So by the end of this year this vigorous and energetic young fellow of seventy-six had completed his work, and begun to look about him for someone who would relieve him of it. After the usual negotiations, he sold out all his interests to Mr. Solly Joel, and retired to his beautiful home at Wynberg.



Mr. J. B. Robinson and his sisters Miss Ida Robinson (now Countess Labia) and Miss Girlie Robinson after the election at Krugersdorp.



"J.B.R." of South Africa.

In the course of his active career, Robinson had fought in several campaigns, discovered a diamond mine, been the pioneer of the diamond industry and one of the founders of Kimberley, become its Mayor and represented it in Parliament, taken the leading part in stamping out the crime of Illicit Diamond Buying and thus saved the industry of diamond mining at the most critical stage of its existence ; had been the pioneer of the greatest goldfield in the world, taken a prominent part in the politics of the Transvaal, done his best to avert a war, reformed the system of the labour on the Rand, played a great part in the achievement of Responsible Government ; and had been one of the leading men in South Africa for nearly fifty years. At the same time, he had made a great fortune for himself, and his business activities had created employment for thousands of men. It was not a bad record for the old frontiersman's son.



At Wynberg, Cape Province—A Sunlit Avenue of Pines near Hawthornden.

Photo by favour of S.A. Publicity Dept

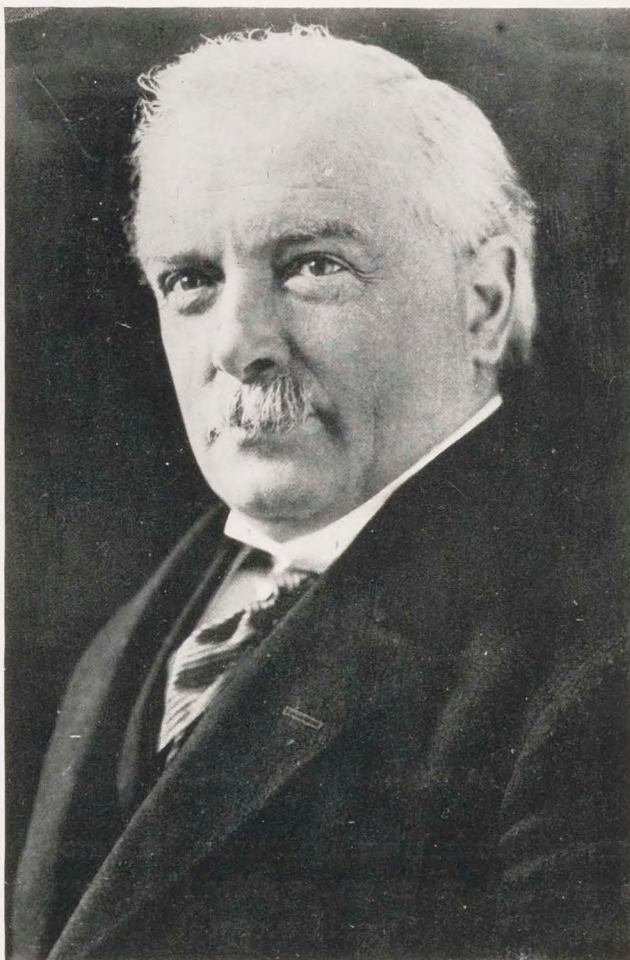
He had lived for a time in a house at Muizenberg, but early in 1917 he had furnished the house at Wynberg and moved into it. Here he finally established himself, giving liberally to the soup kitchens established each winter for the poor, and supporting other local charities from time to time. The Park Lane residence in London had been disposed of in 1914, but even now he had not ended his travels, for he paid another visit to England in 1922 and again in 1923.

On the occasion of the former visit, he found that he had been offered a peerage, which would have been a not unfitting recognition of a life from which his country had benefitted so greatly, not only through his discoveries of diamonds and gold, and through his vigor-



At Wynberg, Cape Province.

ous development of South Africa's resources, but through his constant endeavour to promote peace and goodwill between the races. It was widely assumed that he would accept it, and many letters were received from people who desired to congratulate him upon the honour the King intended to bestow in recognition of his many services to his country—services extending over a period of more than fifty years. One of the first to write in this strain was General Booth, of the Salvation Army, who recalled the "very practical interest" which Sir Joseph had shown in the work of the Salvation Army in earlier days, and which, the letter went on, was a "sweet



The Right Hon. David Lloyd George, O.M.
Prime Minister of England from 1916 to 1922.

remembrance" to General Booth, as it had been to his father, the first General. Other letters were received from various individuals whom Sir Joseph had helped in former times, and some from people who had never had any connection with him, but who wished to express their pleasure at finding a prominent South African, whose work had so much benefited his country, in the list of honours.

But when it was found that the grant had aroused opposition in certain quarters, Robinson decided not to avail himself of it; and he declined the proffered honour in the following dignified letter to Mr. Lloyd George.

London,
23rd June, 1922

Dear Prime Minister,

I have read with surprise the discussion which took place yesterday in the House of Lords on the proposed offer of a peerage to myself. I have not, as you know, sought the suggested honour. It is now some sixty years since I commenced as a pioneer the task of building up the industries of South Africa. I am now an old man to whom honours and dignities are no longer matters of much concern, and I should be sorry if any honour conferred upon me were the occasion of such ill-feeling as was manifested in the House of Lords yesterday, and whilst deeply appreciating the honour which has been suggested, I would wish, if I may, without discourtesy to yourself, and without impropriety to His Most Gracious Majesty the King, to beg permission to decline the proposal.

Yours truly,

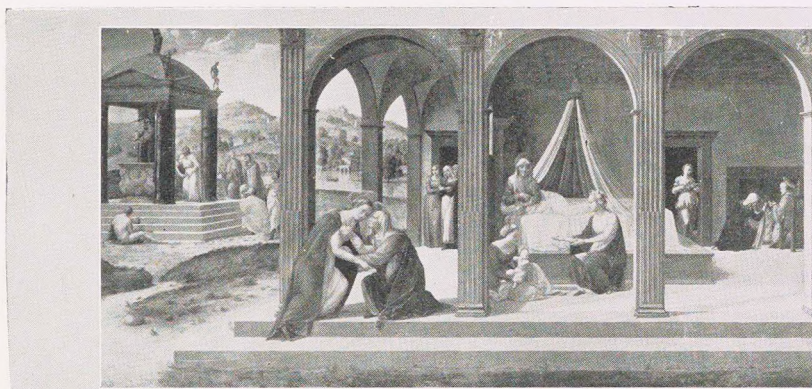
J. B. Robinson.

The effect of this dignified letter was to raise Sir Joseph Robinson far higher in public estimation than the peerage itself would have done. The Press considered that the letter did him credit; the House of Lords was of the same opinion, and expressed it freely: so much so, indeed, that the London correspondent of the Milan "*Corriere della Sera*," looking at the matter with the impartial eye of a foreigner, drily concluded his survey with the remark: "Thus the House of Lords has deprived itself of a good element."

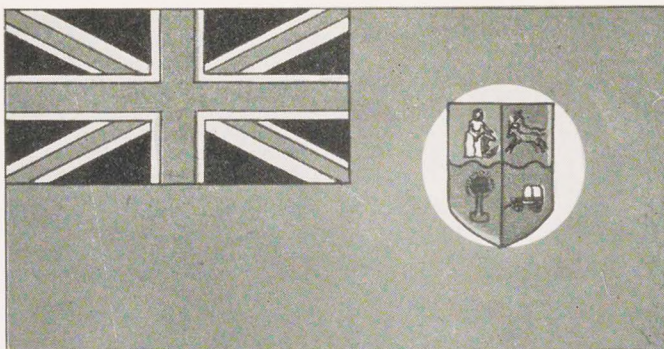
The debate in the House of Lords was characterised by ignorance, and a considerable amount of personal prejudice. For instance, a noble Lord found himself able to state that he knew of no public benefactions that had been made by Sir Joseph in South Africa, whereas it might have been remembered that amongst many other donations, no less than three thousand pounds was willingly contributed by Sir Joseph Robinson to the Buxton Hostel, established in Pretoria during Lord Buxton's period of office as Governor-General, and it was this benefaction which largely ensured the success of the scheme.

That Robinson had been right in refusing the peerage was shown later. There had been for some time a growing feeling in South Africa that the conferment of peerages was unsuitable in a country without a feudal background, and his refusal set the seal upon it. He had the sympathy of his countrymen in his action, and it is now unlikely that any South African will receive a peerage in the future, as far as the Union Government is concerned.

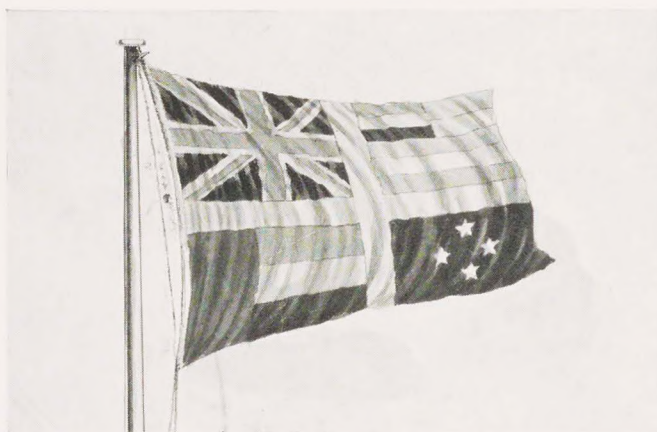
Soon after this he determined to leave England finally, and gave orders for the sale of the pictures and furniture which had formerly adorned his house in Park Lane, but which had now been in storage for some years past. The pictures were put up for sale at Christie's accordingly, but when they actually came under the hammer, and Robinson renewed his acquaintance with them—for he had not seen them for several years before this—he found himself very unwilling to part with them, and most of them were bought in by himself. The sale created a great sensation, fabulous sums being realised for some of the works of art that were disposed of.



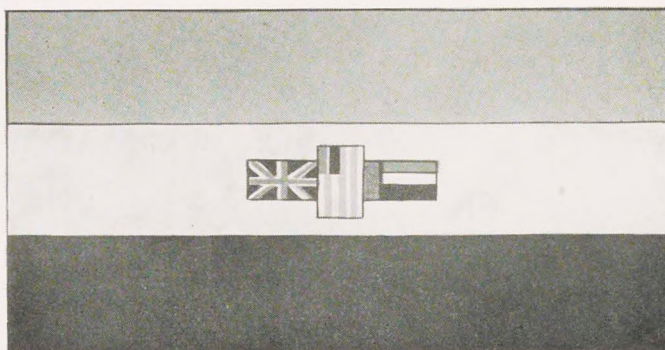
The Nativity of St. John the Baptist (Ghirlandaio), A masterpiece from Sir Joseph Robinson's collection of Art Treasures at the Dudley House Gallery.



THE FIRST NATIONAL FLAG.
(As proposed by General Hertzog. 1910)



SOUTH AFRICAN FLAG.
(As proposed by the Union Senate.)



THE PRESENT NATIONAL FLAG.

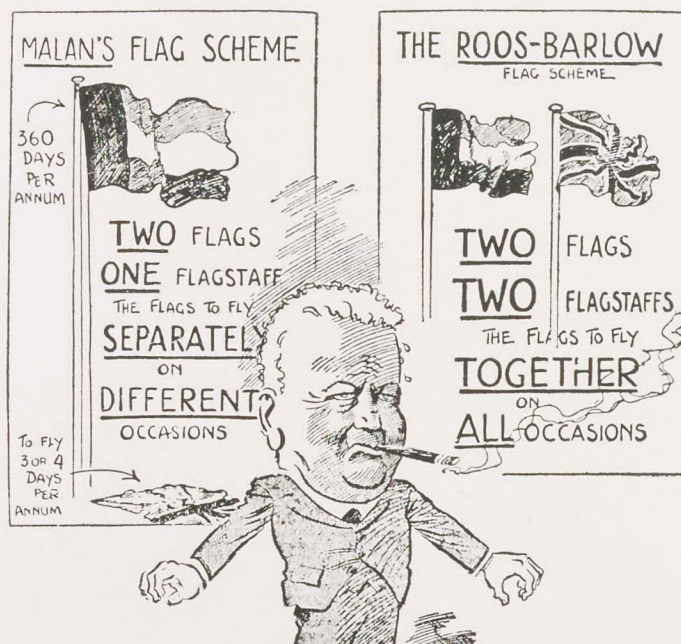
CHAPTER XIV.

THE FLAG QUESTION—CONCLUSION

Even now the late years of the old man's life were not to be entirely deserted by that spirit of combat which had marked so much of his earlier life. He took still a keen and clear-sighted interest in public affairs, and when the Hertzog Government came into power in 1924, it was not long before he realised that his country would still have need of his help. In fulfilment of an election pledge, the Government announced its intention of establishing a new flag for the Union of South Africa, by which the distinct individuality of the young nation might be more fully represented than by the flag then commonly used—the Red Ensign, with the arms of the Union. There was a good deal of support for this suggestion among both races ; but unfortunately the Government, not content with the suggested change, announced its intention of evolving an entirely new flag, on which neither the old Republican flags nor the Union Jack would appear. This suggested exclusion of the Union Jack aroused feelings of violent hostility among the English-speaking section of the population, and it was evident that a crisis was approaching, in which the country would be split from top to bottom on the old racial lines.

Here was a chance for Sir Joseph Robinson, and he took it. He gave an interview to the "Cape Argus" in September, 1927, and afterwards wrote a letter to the same paper, in the course of which he said : " Nothing can possibly give the country a stronger position than to see the Union Jack is also in the flag of South Africa. We have to bear in mind that a very large proportion of the inhabitants of the Union are British, either immigrants or born in this country. They are true Afrikanders, especially those born here, but they carry with them, deeply grained, a feeling of reverence towards the old flag of England, and that feeling should be respected.

" Besides, it would give the Union a better international standing if the Union Jack were in the flag, not necessarily in a position of dominance, but in one of respect, and certainly in a better position than figuring as an infinitesimal portion of a shield or medallion on the flag.



You pays your money and you takes your choice. Study of an Independent wrestling with his political soul in order to be imaginatively sympathetic.

[Sir Abe Bailey's remedy for the flag confusion is "imaginative sympathy."]

From the "Johannesburg Star," 1926

“What would happen, for instance, supposing that the country were afterwards to be interfered with by a foreign power? It would be impossible for South Africa to defend herself. If Germany, having had her Colonies taken away from her and appropriated by the Allied Powers, decided to make her appearance in this portion of Africa, and any opposition were offered, and there was no backing by England under the Union Jack, Germany could lay Cape Town in ashes in a few hours.

“South Africa’s wealth is proverbial, and it is well known throughout the world that she is exceedingly rich in minerals, and any foreign Power would be only too glad to participate in a share of it.

“Considering all this, and much more that I might add, it is beyond my conception and I cannot understand why there is any objection to the Union Jack, which is a clear and emphatic sign to the world at large that England will never allow any foreign Power to establish any rights to South Africa, and so is the best possible guarantee of our independence.

“South Africa contains a large number of English Afrikanders, as well as English people, besides the vast millions of her native population, who are all favourably disposed to British rule.”

The great importance of these views lay not only in their correctness, but in the fact that it was Robinson who had stated them. The agitation which had been carried on for some time past against the Flag Bill was imagined by the Government—quite wrongly—to be a factitious agitation, worked up by the South African Party with a view to making Party capital, and not in fact representing any solid block of public opinion. In this view they were entirely mistaken, for the whole of the English-speaking South Africans were intensely hostile to the idea of omitting the Union Jack from the national flag. But this the Nationalists were unable, or unwilling, to believe, and at first they treated the agitation as a mere Party manoeuvre. But when Robinson, who was known to be friendly towards the Nationalists, and whose South African patriotism had never been questioned, ranged himself on the side of the Union Jack, it at once became evident that there was more in the opposition

to the Government's flag than had been supposed. The Nationalists, in view of Sir Joseph's position and record, attached far more weight to his views than they would have done to those of any member of the South African Party, and they took warning by his words.

A conference was held between the Party leaders on both sides, and in October Sir Joseph was able to make another statement to the "Cape Argus."

"I need hardly say," he began, "that I am very glad indeed that the suggestions and advice which I have given to some of the important men on both sides in the Flag controversy should have proved so acceptable, and that the two main parties in the struggle for political supremacy in South Africa should now be conferring, with a view to a permanent settlement of so thorny a question, involving the adequate recognition of the Union Jack.

"There is certainly now an indication that the status of the country will be improved and enhanced, and that we shall be able to obtain money in Europe at a reasonable rate of interest to develop the great resources which lie hidden underground in our portion of the great continent of Africa.

"The result will be that everyone will participate in the advantages which will accrue to the country under the circumstances which I have just referred to ; and if my views are carried out, there will be no unemployment in South Africa, for the settlement of the Flag controversy will inevitably result in capital being freed to pour into the country for the opening up and development of its enormous potential resources.

"Any amount of work will thus be found. Not only will the unemployed be absorbed, but every individual in the country will participate in the advantages consequent upon the inflow of capital, and the circulation of money. Trade will improve in every respect, and all citizens of the Union, of whatever shade of political opinion, will enjoy the marvellous improvement that will follow upon the settlement I have referred to.

"It has been one of the most amazing features in life that there should have been a fight and a struggle to keep back the very advantages which the country so much desires : that is, the exploitation

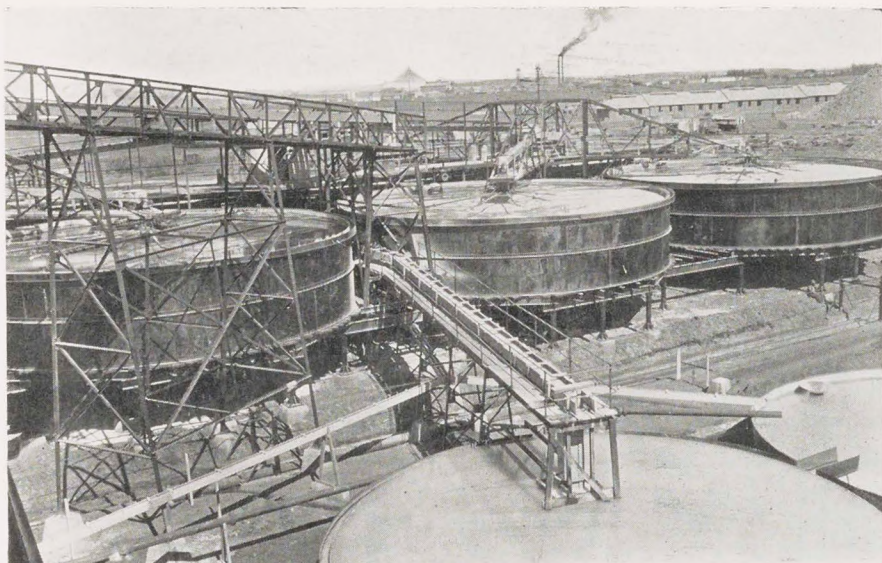
of its resources and its great wealth, thus improving its trade and conferring a boon upon the unemployed that will be much appreciated by them and the whole of South Africa."

The country is in fact highly prosperous at the present time; and, what is perhaps more important, the settlement of the Flag question has removed the last great cause of hostility between the two races. Now Sir Joseph Robinson was able to take his leave of politics and confine himself to his domestic interests. Even the litigation which had played a part in his career from time to time had now come to an end, and the evening sky was free of clouds. Hostilities had died down, prejudices passed slowly away, and South Africa was proud of her oldest pioneer. In his house at Wynberg countless messages of congratulation reached him upon the occasion of his eighty-eighth birthday; the Press devoted articles to him, and his views were once more sought upon the future of South Africa.

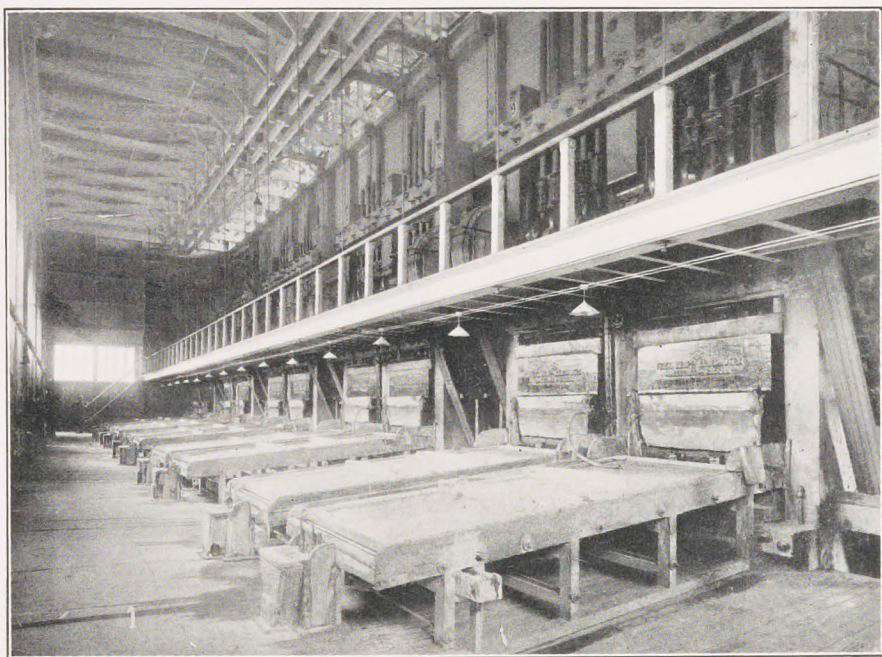
With an experience reaching back to the sixties of the last century, and with the record of a brilliantly successful life behind him, he had a better right than any man to express his opinions upon the subject. He had been connected with the leading industry of the country from the very beginning. He had known everybody of importance in the affairs of the sub-Continent for more than fifty years past. He had himself played a prominent part in every event of importance for many years. There could thus be no question as to his experience; nor could there be any as to his judgment.

It is generally recognised in South Africa that the wealth of the country depends upon the gold mines. Not only do these mines produce the greater part of the country's annual output of commodities of all descriptions, so that their products head the list of exports with a value nearly half the total annual export value of the country, but they give employment to scores of thousands of white men, to over a hundred thousand natives, and indirectly to many thousands more. They spend millions in wages, which add immensely to the purchasing power of the Union, they circulate more millions in the purchase of stores, and huge cities have grown up as the direct consequence of their activities, where the farmer finds

Scenes on the Robinson Mines



Surface Works on the Randfontein Central Co.



One of the Langlaagte Batteries.

an unlimited market for his products. In fact, the whole of South Africa, its people of every rank and walk of life, benefit enormously from the presence and work of the gold mines, from the native labourer, who, in return for a few months work in the mines, is able to gain what amounts to a competence for life, and on returning to his kraal is in a financial position to make his own selection among the dusky daughters of his people, to the white farmer who finds a market at his very door.

But a mine is in its nature a wasting asset. A time must come when the gold it contains will be exhausted, and the men who owed their livelihood to it must seek employment elsewhere. This is the sword of Damocles which many people feel to be hanging over South Africa. As long as she is the greatest gold-producer of the world, there can be no fear for her future, at least from the economic point of view, but when the gold of the Witwatersrand has all been extracted and shipped overseas, what will remain to her but a mouldering city at Johannesburg, where the rusting stamps will stand silent, and no mutter of activity will any longer be heard among the deserted streets? Such is the picture which the South African, in moments of pessimism, conjures up of his country's future—a derelict gold industry, and a land returning to the patriarchal life of the farmers of the olden times.

This, however, is not the view of Sir Joseph; and there can be no man whose opinion on such a matter carries more weight than does his. He holds that gold-mining will be carried on in South Africa for many decades to come; for though the present goldfields must be worked out in the course of time, yet he is certain that new discoveries will be made. The country is highly mineralized, and as yet it has been but little prospected in any really thorough and scientific way. The chances are in his own opinion very strongly in favour of new discoveries being made, if not in one, then in another of the many highly mineralized zones of the country.

Moreover, it is not only to gold that we need look in the future. The recent great discoveries of huge diamond deposits have shown how right he was in his belief that mineral wealth in unlimited quantities still lay beneath the surface, to be found for the seeking.

And besides diamonds and gold, South Africa is rich in almost every variety of precious, semi-precious and base metal and mineral known to civilisation. There are great deposits of copper in the Northern Transvaal, which were worked in ancient times, and which are still being exploited to-day; there are also great quantities of iron and coal, while in other parts of South Africa are found asbestos, manganese, and many other minerals, the value of which has not yet been fully realised, while their development has in the past been retarded to a great extent by the absence of proper transport facilities.

Such are the views of the old pioneer, who remains to-day, as he has been throughout his life, a thorough optimist where the future of his country is concerned. Others may prophesy evil unto the people, but he will have none of them; in his view—and who shall contradict him?—the Union of South Africa is assured of a great and growing place in the community of nations. Her wealth, in years to come, will prove to be of vaster extent than any of her sons have dreamed as yet; her people will yet learn to drop their antagonisms, and to work together for the good of the country; and the clouds which, in the past, have so often hung in her skies, bringing their portent of storm, will pass away at length and give place to the clear sunlight of prosperity and peace.

Now at last he was leaving England finally to spend the remainder of his life in his own country. Under the shadow of the towering Table Mountain in the Cape Peninsula, a beautiful residence was prepared at Wynberg, named Hawthornden, to receive the family and here the old pioneer came at length to seek the peace and repose to which a long and strenuous life had so richly entitled him.

“Hawthornden,” Wynberg, is a lovely old place situated amid beautiful surroundings. It is strange that long before there was any idea of the family being connected with Italy—as it now is through the marriage of Miss Ida Robinson with Count Labia, Consul-General and Minister Plenipotentiary for Italy—it should have been made so reminiscent of that country. The lawns and terraces, the cypress trees, the palms and vines and the riot of bright flowers, all remind one of an Italian garden. There is a fine orchard and a forest of firs and oaks, and looking from the vineyard one sees the

residence outlined against the dark background of Table Mountain.

The house is arranged and furnished in the style of an Italian villa. The spacious reception rooms, opening conveniently into each other, having Italian furniture in black and gold. The ceiling was artistically painted many years ago by an Italian in cream, gold and pastel blue. Italian scenes by Italian artists and lovely statuary by Italian sculptors adorn the rooms.

The hall, the dining-room and the billiard room contain fine examples of English, Scottish, Dutch and French artists, while in the library are to be found priceless pictures by some of the old Dutch Masters. The ball-room, below the big conservatory, is often the scene of distinguished gatherings, for Count and Countess Labia are fond of entertaining their host of friends, especially on official occasions such as the visit of an Italian war-ship or other vessel, and Sir Joseph, though he is no longer able to join in these social functions, likes nothing better than to know the younger people are enjoying themselves.

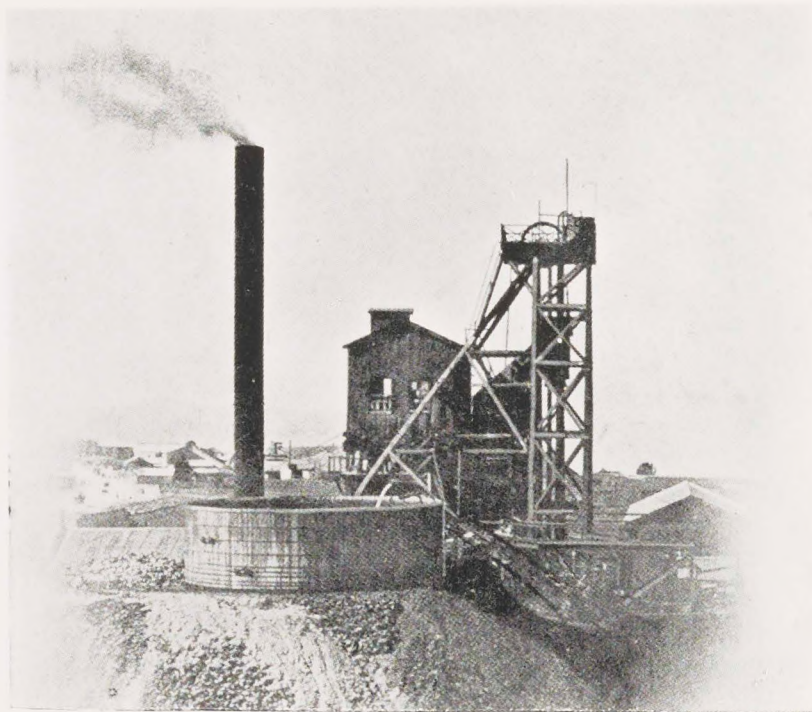
There in the lovely gardens around Hawthornden the rich colouring of Hybiscus and Bougainville growing in luxurious profusion amidst flowers everywhere, are an outstanding feature. Sheltered by clumps of Oleander, clusters of old world roses flourish in abundance, their fragrance filling the air, and blending with the spice of the Eucalyptus and the warm resinous scents of the towering Cape Pines.

At eighty-nine years of age the old pioneer lives there to-day, still vigorous in body, though bent by Rheumatism, yet happily in the enjoyment of a fresh mentality which for clarity and penetration and a truly unique memory surpasses those of many men of younger age.

The clear complexion and keen blue eyes undimmed by the great age—flashing in vitality and the powerful frame are the envy of the numerous visitors who call at “Hawthornden,” nestling amidst giant oak trees which were planted early in the 18th century by Governor Simon Van der Stel.

Now that the fighting days of the old Pioneer are over, he and his wife enjoy the Indian summer of their lives among their children and bonny grand-children amidst the beautiful surroundings of the Cape Peninsula—in many of their aspects unequalled in the world.

Early days on the Rand



A Pioneer Mine Equipment on the WITWATERSRAND.
Headgear, Battery House and Cyanide Vat.



One of the first large Gold Shipments from Johannesburg.

PRESIDENT AND PIONEER

SIR JOSEPH ROBINSON AND OOM PAUL

An impression by one who knows all about both of them

It was in the late eighties of last century that President Kruger became interested in the personality of J. B. R. more than anyone else. The Government of the old Republic and the Boers themselves justly viewed him as the original magnate of the Rand Goldfields, which came to them as a surprise of the first rank, when mine after mine produced the valuable metal on the bleak ridge known to them as the Witwatersrand. Where Springbok herds had roamed in their hundreds and thousands undisturbed over the wide veld plains for some forty years, ever since the first trekkers came north from the Cape and Free State to found Potchefstroom and Pretoria, mining headgears, roaring stamps and first a city of tents, then mud houses, followed by galvanised iron edifices, arose within a year or two. Unperturbed by the ridicule and criticism poured out upon his so-called cabbage gardens, as his mine was called by certain club jokers at Pretoria, J.B.R. had built the first stone house on the farm Langlaagte, destined shortly to be one of the greatest gold producers in the world. He planked his faith as well as his money on the Reef going down at an easy angle from the surface, yielding the precious metal in a rich average, and establishing at one stroke the Rand Gold Industry as a safe investment of international value and importance.

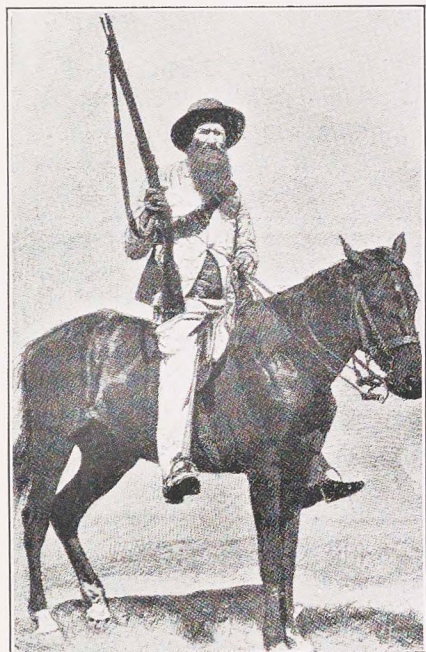
At Pretoria the doubters who had laughed sang small and made desperate attempts to get in on adjoining properties on the ground floor.

It had been a keenly observant old friend of Sir Joseph Robinson, Charles E—, who had given him the first signal to come to the Rand to examine the new formation without loss of time.

The result of that first visit is written to-day in records of the vast gold output for the world from that wonderful field, announced at the end of 1928 to be valued at no less than one thousand millions sterling. When "J.B.R." as he was popularly known, invited Oom Paul to visit his first shaft at Langlaagte and see the new Reef for himself, the old President was not quite as enthusiastic as he was a few days later, when he panned gold from Banket selected by himself in the shaft. It was this simple but convincing experience which to my knowledge created a profound belief in the old President's mind in Sir Joseph, a confidence shown on frequent occasions in the following ten years, during which period probably no other magnate had a similar close personal relationship with him.

J.B.R., was perhaps better informed than anyone else as to what was going on at Pretoria as far as the Boer Government was concerned. In contrast to most others, who enjoyed the personal entree at Presidents *huis* he never asked for anything for himself or his concerns, on the contrary he was in the position of being able to offer assistance on various occasions, assistance which was readily accepted. Even during the turbulent months after the Raid and Reform Committee's trial in 1897, when Oom Paul lost the co-operation of many of his best old friends through permitting his Volksraad to assume a hostile attitude to the Industry producing the greatest proportion of the country's revenue—even when J.B.R. had to withdraw the support of his papers—the old President cherished the friendliest personal feelings to the Laird of Langlaagte and often expressed his regret at the temporary estrangement, which did not prevent his being returned once more as always before at the head of the poll at the next presidential election. "Die ou Robinson" (that old Robinson), said Oom Paul one day to me, "why has he turned against me as well? I can't understand it at all. He is far and away one of the best friends the country has had among all the Uitlanders whom only the gold brought here. That cursed gold, why has it been put in our soil, only to drench it yet in blood—of that I am sure." The old man spoke sadly and with vision, for only two years later came the abortive conference at Bloemfontein with Sir Alfred Milner, and within barely three months, the fat

was in the fire. On October 10th, 1899, Oom Paul's 74th birthday, that regrettable, ill-advised and ill fated Boer ultimatum went to the British Agency, Pretoria, the very afternoon on which I predicted to the old President that the issue of the challenge to the mightiest Empire in existence spelt the wiping out of the Independence of the South African Republics.



" Oom Piet " 1900.



Mr. Thomas Atkins, 1900.

Once the state of war existed J.B.R., who was in England, took up a very dignified attitude, warning the British Government and public privately and in the press not be too over-confident at the start, a warning justified by the subsequent grave events up to Feb. 1900, but assisting the British Government in every possible way. Right up to his sad passing in exile on the shores of Lake Geneva, Oom Paul had the kindest feelings for his old friend, whose relationship with the gallant old President was throughout of the most cordial nature, a fact cordially appreciated by the late General Louis Botha, who found in Sir Joseph one of the most generous friends of the people in need during the disturbed period of 1914 after the Rebellion and the South-West Campaign. L.W.

The Famous White Helmet



Sir Joseph Robinson as he was known to all South Africa.

SIR JOSEPH BENJAMIN ROBINSON, Bart.

SOUTH AFRICA'S PREMIER PIONEER

In the fascinating history of the great South African Gold and Diamond industries, the record of Joseph Benjamin Robinson must obviously command a pre-eminent position. For he may be regarded as the Premier among that brilliant galaxy of pioneers which included, *inter alia*, Rhodes, Beit, Wernher, Bailey, Rudd, Farrar, the Barna'os, the Joels, the Albus, Isaac Lewis and Samuel Marks. Realising that to-day these two industries have yielded nearly £1,400,000,000 in gold and diamonds, transformed South Africa from a poor, struggling community into one of the world's progressive nations and maintained England in her traditional position as the monetary centre of the world, one is amazed on reflecting that at a certain moment Rhodes and Rudd might have had practically all Kimberley for £6,000 but could not raise the money. And that the first orders for South African gold shares were refused on the London Stock Exchange, any stray buyers being compelled to trade with a few diamond dealers in Hatton Garden. Later, they were dealt in on the Stock Exchange—in the American market!

A MIRACULOUS KICK

Considering the modest point of departure of Mr. Robinson's romantic career, one is struck by the extent and scope of his subsequent achievements. Before fortune smiled upon him, he conducted a farmer-trader enterprise in the Orange Free State, but soon he decided to start for the Vaal River, where diamond discoveries had been reported. After discovering the first important alluvial diggings he soon became a busy buyer of diamonds, paying for them in cows, goats, oxen and, possibly, in bottles of "Cape smoke" or brandy—all classic forms of trading tokens in those primitive, adventurous days. Mr. Robinson's title ultimately of Premier South

African Pioneer appears justified and appropriate, for he was the first diamond dealer to ship stones to London. He has himself told the story :—

DIAMONDS FOR COWS

“ One morning, at sunrise, I was startled by a loud shouting and saw my men rushing towards me in great excitement. One of them had found a big diamond. ‘ What will you give me for it ? ’ he asked. ‘ I will give you ten cows. ’ Accepted. I sent the man to select his cows and mark them thereupon with his name. Off they went again and found diamonds every day. Having accumulated a large quantity we decided to ship them to London. We made a wide belt full of small pockets ; in each of which was placed a diamond. My partner girded it about his body and never took it off until he arrived in London. *That was the first consignment of South African diamonds ever sent to London.* ”

MILLIONS FROM “ CABBAGE PATCHES ”

Again, Joseph Robinson displayed his uncanny shrewdness and foresight in purchasing gold-bearing lands in the Transvaal at a time when even the Rothschilds’ expert, among others, contemptuously condemned that region as a desolate, poverty-stricken waste, only fit for natives.

“ Gold ? All bosh, my dear Sir, ” said one eminent mining engineer.

“ Not enough gold to make a wedding ring ! ” jeered another mining expert.

Robinson was so impressed by these weighty remarks that he hustled about and bought up all the land he could find ! People roared at his optimistic pronouncements about this God-forsaken strip of territory. But, despite their hilarity and their jeers, he purchased, on bargain terms, scores of farms, including the famous Randfontein, with its seven miles of gold reef. For about £20,000 he picked up the waste land still worth millions, after producing many other millions.

“ Robinson made money in Kimberley diamonds and is now throwing it away on Transvaal dirt, ” they said. “ He has bought

an old cabbage patch for £7,000 !” Loud laughter).

This “cabbage patch” was the famous Langlaagte Estate, which ultimately attained a market value of £2,000,000, and has since paid enormous sums in dividends. In short, “J.B.” had not been long at work before Kimberley was again roaring—this time with envious vexation. During the great boom of 1895 he was credited with being worth between £5,000,000 and £6,000,000.

A SON OF THE SOIL

When the Rand was creating a sensation throughout the world it was generally believed that only those of Anglo-Teutonic origin could make millions out of Kimberley and the Rand. Now, Joseph Robinson was a genuine son of the soil, having first seen the light at Cradock, Cape Colony. Of course, in technical and other affairs he had to co-operate with the other leaders of the two industries. But, from the first, he developed a sturdy—others said obstinate—belief in his own judgment and ability which prompted him to take his own course and stand the racket, whatever it might cost him. And, as a matter of fact, it sometimes cost him enormous sums, this “ploughing his lonely furrow,” just as Lord Rosebery boasted of having done in his political career. For many reasons, which included, of course, his strong temperamental convictions, Mr. Robinson missed his chance of joining the great De Beers amalgamation, which might have increased his power and *prestige*, and even his financial status. Indeed, it is fairly probable that a greater capacity for “mixing” would have furnished him with endless occasions for pleasant social intercourse and obviated many misunderstandings. In the old days, whether in English or the *taal* he was considered—and justly so—the best speaker in all South Africa. He knows what he is talking about, and he has a truly remarkable memory: it is this which makes him at all times so convincing and interesting.

RHODES AND ROBINSON

On balance it may fairly be said that Kimberley was rather a small place, in which there was scarcely elbow room for two such masterful, determined temperaments as Rhodes and Robinson. Throughout the period of Mr. Rhodes’ Imperial activities in South Africa



Imperial Finance.

From the "Pretoria Press," 1897.

it was the fashion in certain circles to represent the two men as personal antagonists, but this may be taken as a statement without foundation. Both men were big in their personalities as well as mentalities, and both of them certainly by different methods had the best interests of the Empire at heart and especially those of South Africa.

RHODES' HISTORIC REPUTATION

Rhodes was recognised to possess the inspiration of genius, a mental capacity which had resulted from his studies and his training ; a personality which impressed everybody and enabled him to treat on equal terms with Cabinets, Governments, foreign monarchs and puissant financiers like the Rothschilds. Actually, Rhodes was accepted as a sort of historic personage throughout Europe ; Robinson was a big man in South Africa. But, considering his origin, education and environment, Robinson's qualities were rare and precious—intuition, shrewd judgment, the pluck, patience and ability to consummate his projects by personal effort and a financial opportunism which yielded splendid results. He secured the maximum benefits by concentrating his purview and effort on South Africa, plus his financial responsibilities in Europe as in South Africa. The dreams of Rhodes were political, Imperial, almost universal, and his vision extended far beyond that of the average statesman or financier. The outlook of Robinson was to a certain extent limited by his early experiences. He was hampered in his public career by the infirmity of deafness at a comparatively early age, yet acquired a keen and far-sighted outlook on world affairs to a considerable degree.

ROSEBERY AND ROBINSON. LONELY FURROWS

Rosebery's "lonely furrow" was ploughed mainly as a result of his rank, wealth, intellectuality and delicate dilettante tastes, combined with a patrician's aversion to the donkey-work of political life among Radicals with whom he had but little intercourse and no particular sympathy, although he was their Leader. Robinson's special furrow was ploughed largely by the influence of personal temperament, his infirmity, his ineradicable conviction that his way and his plan were always the best, even though the entire Rand stood in array against both. And, let it be said, that frequently



"Joseph's Dilemma."

From the 'Pretoria Press,' 1898.

he had an uncanny knack of being right, and receiving the confirmation of events as his reward. He was, at one time, a strong admirer of Mr. Chamberlain, but when that eminent statesman opposed the proposal for a settlement of all difficulties with the Transvaal and insisted upon a bellicose policy of "driving the Boers into the sea," Robinson had to revise his views about Chamberlain's status as a statesman dealing with an international problem. Robinson was always for a peaceful settlement, but those possessing "inside" knowledge of events at that period were convinced that Mr. Chamberlain's policy was dictated mainly by this personal consideration:—



"Checkmated." From the Xmas number of "Truth," 1897.

CHAMBERLAIN AND ROBINSON

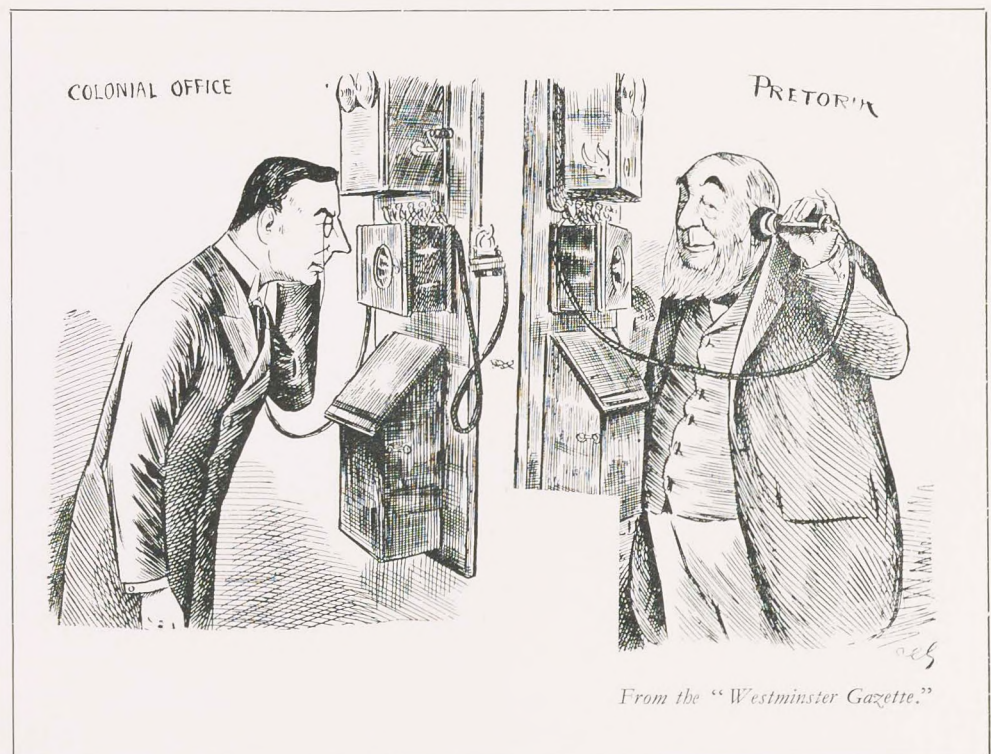
"Where I, the responsible Minister, have failed in securing satisfactory settlement," said Joseph Chamberlain in a famous speech during the Boer War, "it is evident that I cannot permit a few mining magnates to succeed in a diplomatic tournament with Kruger, and find myself compelled to ratify an Agreement proposed without my initiation and carried through without the intervention of the Cabinet in its official capacity."

Let us admit that in assuming this attitude he must have been poisoned with fear of the Opposition, who would have revelled in the sight of Chamberlain playing second fiddle to the mining magnates.

CHAMBERLAIN'S PERSONAL MAJUBA!

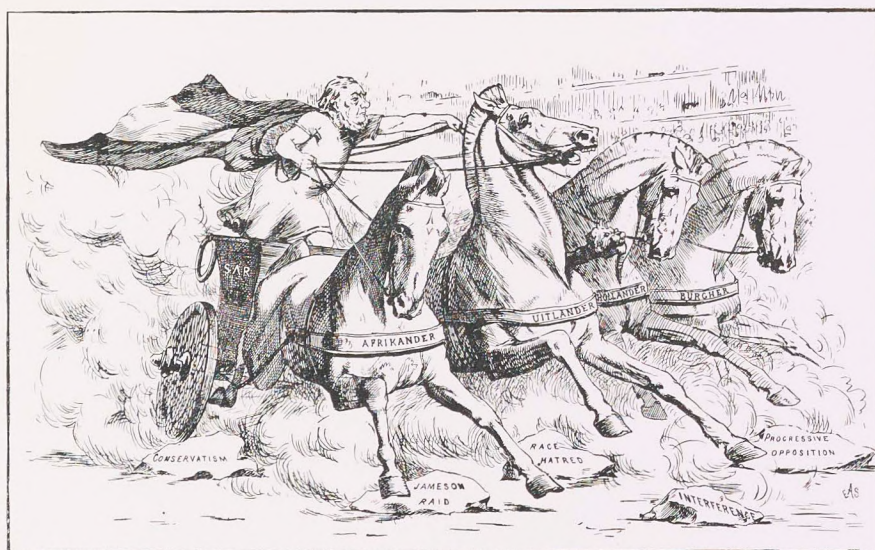
South African history is there to prove that in assuming this violent attitude, Chamberlain was demonstrating his determination to wipe out his personal Majuba—even at the cost of a deadly, useless struggle. One may fairly say “useless,” for he had cognisance of the certainty that everything could be settled with Kruger on a friendly basis and without any obligations being imposed upon the British taxpayer. The mining magnates had agreed to pay for it all, on a basis accepted by Kruger, who announced in Volksraad that an Agreement had been reached, and that Transvaal finances would be placed under competent European control. For the first time in South African history, the financiers—even unto Mr. J. B. Robinson—being unanimous, after collaboration with genuine cordiality in the pursuit of this admirable and patriotic Settlement.

In 1897.

*From the "Westminster Gazette."*

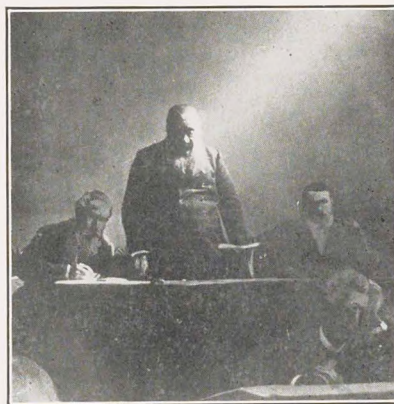
PROVIDENTIAL "LONELY FURROW"

When the Jameson Raid shocked the world, Mr. Robinson's "lonely furrow" policy proved providential. As the most prominent magnates were at first sentenced to death, but finally fined heavily, and he was not a participant, he was left free to assume his usual independent attitude. What did he do? "Mr. Robinson," says one authority, "was in constant telegraphic communication with the President, who has formally acknowledged the services rendered by Mr. Robinson during the crisis." On the other hand, there was a time when Mr. Robinson used to be consulted by Mr. Chamberlain on South African affairs, and it was quite understood that during the Raid period the former rendered very valuable services to the Imperial Government. When Mr. Chamberlain, acting on the advice of a man whom he then trusted, decided to invite Paul Kruger to London, such advice was attributed to Mr. Robinson. This was, of course, an injustice. What Mr. Robinson did, on being told that the invitation had been sent, was to invite Oom Paul to make Dudley House his home should he decide to visit London. Ultimately, Paul Kruger decided to remain in South Africa, and thus missed a fine opportunity of making the acquaintance of British Ministers and of British people. A misfortune—for South Africa as for the entire Empire!



Managing a Difficult Team.

From the "Johannesburg Times," 1898, with apologies to "Punch."



Oom Paul

Photo by Sir Percy Fitzpatrick, K.C.M.C.



Mrs. Kruger (Tante SANNIE) and her grand daughter
NETTIE ELOF on the stoep, 1895:

Photo by Leo Weinthal.

KRUGER AND ROBINSON

Those who know Robinson best, all agree in thinking that while he was a keen, successful financier and mining magnate, his heart was really in *politics*. From the moment he became independent financially, he founded newspapers and played a prominent part in South African politics, always ready to devote influence, money and personal effort to any movement destined to promote the success of his policy. And, of course, he was well equipped. He knew South Africa from A to Z, he spoke the *taal*, he was *persona grata* with the Boers of every class. Finally, he was the only man who had the pluck to stand up to the redoubtable Paul Kruger. These two tough nuts would argue and even wrangle interminably—in the taal tongue—over religious, political and economic questions. Some of their religious bouts lasted several days ; both combatants forged in the night fresh polemical bombs to hurl at each other during the day. Paul Kruger was a diligent student of the Bible, and quoted Scripture with a freedom that rather embarrassed some of the British magnates and negotiators whose knowledge of scriptural wisdom was not equal to that of the grim old Boer President. Here again Mr. Robinson developed a shrewdness which equalled his pertinacity in argument. No sooner did Kruger fire off a passage than Robinson would cap it with two or three scriptural shots. Moreover, he even had the audacity to suggest that some of them bore quite a different interpretation than that put upon them by Kruger. All this, instead of exasperating the autocratic old President, only increased his respect for Mr. Robinson. At last, Kruger petered out entirely. He sat with open mouth, gazing in awe at the man who could quote Scripture better, faster and longer than he himself could !

“ BRITISH FLAG MUST PREDOMINATE ”

Kruger really liked Mr. Robinson, because the latter was absolutely independent, disinterested, never pestering him for political or financial favours. Certainly they had financial transactions together. Robinson once lent Oom Paul's Government £100,000 on a short loan. And on another occasion he offered Kruger a State Loan of £7,000,000 for the purchase of the Railway system to facilitate the

development of the country, the lowering of mining costs, as a means of reducing taxation and promoting general prosperity. Never did he relax his eagerness to promote better relations between Johannesburg and Pretoria, and he founded several newspapers in both cities to promote this idea of co-operation for national purposes. Robinson never hesitated to face a tough fact or a rocky position. He warned Kruger of his coming troubles years before they occurred. He believed in Kruger's sincerity until he was finally convinced by events of his error. Then he adopted a characteristically firm attitude towards the autocrat of Pretoria, who was stunned and saddened by his defection at a critical moment. Robinson thought and hoped that the two races could be widened into one harmonious community, working side by side to develop the Transvaal's colossal wealth. No man could have worked harder to avert a rupture ; no man gave warmer support to the British cause throughout the Boer War. "The British Flag must Predominate," said "J.B."

ROBINSON'S £7,000,000 LOAN

As a proof of the view that Robinson extended his vision far beyond the zone of mere money-making, the following statement made to a friend in 1896, just as he was leaving London for South Africa, may be quoted :—

"I intend seeing President Kruger, and mean to impress upon him again the vital necessity for the Transvaal to acquire its railway system. To my mind, if we had a cheap and proper railway service in the country, controlled by business men, it would do more than anything else to reduce working costs to the low level necessary to make low-grade mines return profit. The country would at the same time be acquiring an asset which in the future would bring it in an enormous revenue, and thereby enable the Government to gradually lighten the load of taxation. The railway system could also be extended out of the profits, and outside mining fields opened up which to-day do not pay to work. There can be no doubt but that the Transvaal mining industry is as yet but in its infancy. There are millions of tons of reefs in the country all containing gold in small quantities. The great question is, how to extract that gold at a

sufficiently low cost to show a profit. If that could be done, the people in the country would benefit, the Government would grow more powerful, and the State would expand and thrive. So the point towards which the industry should aim is low working costs, and one of the first steps that should be taken, in my opinion, is the State acquisition of the railway system."

"Would there be any difficulty in obtaining the necessary funds?" asked his friend.



"None whatever. Why, I have myself already offered to lend the Transvaal Government £7,000,000 at a low rate of interest for that very object. Mind, I do not want to do that class of business myself, but I have offered the loan at a low rate, so that if the Government requires any money to acquire the Netherlands Railway it can go with this offer in its hand, and endeavour to obtain it cheaper elsewhere. I shall do my best to convince President Kruger of the wisdom of taking steps to carry this scheme through."

ROBINSON, RHODES & BEIT

One may fairly say that Joseph Robinson was something more than a successful gold-mining financier and millionaire. South



Photo by Ernest Mills.

Mr. Alfred Beit and his pet terrier, 1898.

African annals clearly reveal that for some thirty years he wielded an influence, overt or occult, in South African affairs, financial and political, which was not equalled by any other mining magnate except Rhodes. Alfred Beit certainly rendered inestimable service, financial and personal, but, generally speaking, his influence was exercised and his assistance rendered vicariously—mainly through Cecil John Rhodes. He only went into the Jameson Raid at Rhodes' request. At every stage of that disastrous enterprise he offered the strongest protests that his affection for Rhodes would permit him to formulate. No limit was set to his loyalty to that remarkable and lovable genius—"My friend, right or wrong, can always depend upon my support."

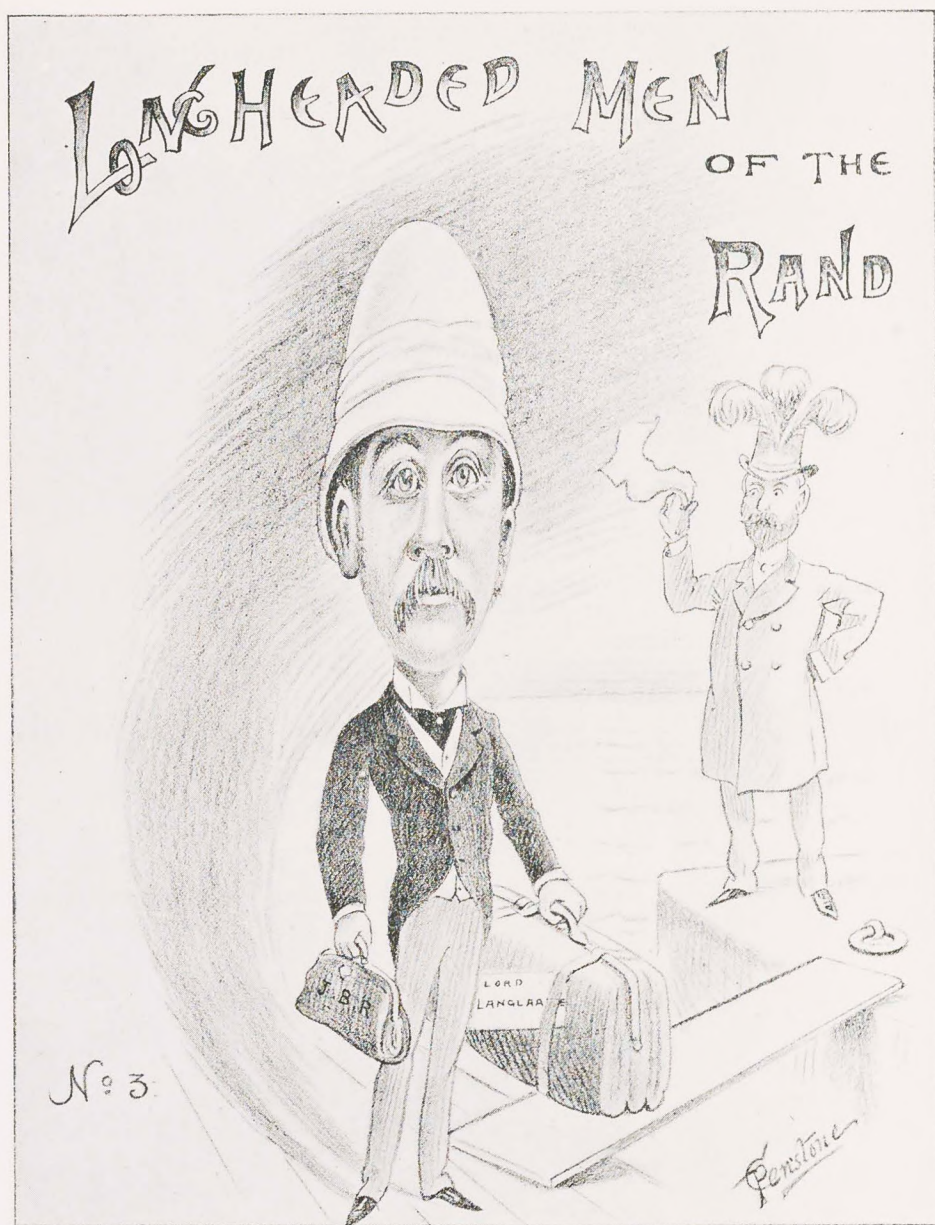
BEIT'S CONCEPTION OF FRIENDSHIP

His conception of *friendship* was based upon the innate conviction that it was just when a friend was ruining himself by his own obstinate folly or by support of some ill-starred enterprise, that he needed the strongest support. Robinson plunged into politics because he loved the game and played it according to his temperament and his opportunities. Alfred Beit always had an instinctive aversion to politics and raidings, his attention being concentrated upon those enterprises in which his own and his friends' millions were embarked. He wanted to make them a success for the benefit of all concerned, including the citizens of the country in which he was, after all, only a temporary sojourner. He once informed a friend that the basis of his fortune was a sum of £2,000 lent him by his father to go to South Africa in search of business opportunities.

It is a well known fact that Alfred Beit was an admirer of J. B. Robinson's far-sighted courage, determination and persistent self-confidence, which brought him such great success in due course.

SIR JOSEPH ROBINSON'S PEERAGE

On several occasions, newspaper sportsmen in this country have raised the question of Sir Joseph Robinson's alleged desire to enter the House of Lords. What, after all, is the truth about this matter? The services he had rendered the Imperial Government, and the



Mr. (now Sir) J. B. Robinson as seen from the Golden City in 1897.

From "The Moon," Johannesburg.

efforts for a friendly settlement he made with President Kruger, combined with a strong desire to help the Raiders in their trouble, appear to have suggested that Sir Joseph Robinson had really earned such distinction as a peerage would bestow. What did one of Sir Joseph's keenest critics say on this point?

"As a political force, Mr. J. B. Robinson has always to be seriously considered. Mr. Chamberlain, I understand, took him into consultation when the 'machinations' of Rhodes created serious political disturbance in South Africa. I have not yet seen that Mr. Robinson's wholly disinterested advice has met with the public recognition it would appear to deserve."



ROBINSON IN THE CITY

Of all the leaders of the Rand mining industry who settled in London, Sir Joseph Robinson was probably the best known and, in many respects, the most popular. His financial *coups* were some-

times spectacular ; some of his operations were not always to the taste of the Stock Exchange big-wigs, or of the other mining magnates, but they were generally redeemed by the saving grace of success. Another reason for Sir Joseph's popularity in London was his readiness to express his views on South African politics, both in public and in the press. Then he was more accessible than the majority of his fellow millionaires, who usually maintained an extremely reserved attitude when dealing with the press. One of the leading Rand financiers once declined to allow his best friend to reproduce his portrait in that friend's journal. Mr. Robinson's Banking House, just opposite the Bank of England, kindled the imagination of the Londoner, and enhanced Robinson's reputation and *prestige* not only in that City, but in South Africa, where several branches were established. Sir Joseph was particularly proud of the Boer Government's permission to issue Notes in South Africa. "They are now," he said to a friend, "being printed in London. They will be of £1, £5, £10, £50 and £100. They have been carefully designed and cannot possibly be forged."

While all the Rand magnates in London worked hard and continuously in the interests of the mines, and of the shareholders, no less than in their own, it is doubtful whether any of them devoted more time to business affairs than Sir J. B. Robinson. Of an intensely practical nature, his varied experience of mining and finance in all their varied manifestations, enabled him to arrive at a decision on important points with remarkable rapidity. In all his work he received zealous assistance from the eminent specialists, financial, banking, technical and administrative, that he had grouped around him.

DUDLEY HOUSE : A SOCIAL CENTRE

In the zenith of his romantic career, Sir Joseph acquired a mansion in Park Lane, Dudley House, which was full of splendid statuary, beautiful pictures and other works of art. The salons were spacious, and decorated in that subdued artistic taste usually associated with the London homes of the British aristocracy. A curious coincidence is that one of the first spectacular diamonds found in South Africa was called "The Star of Africa," and bought by the Earl of Dudley !

In the heart of fashionable London, in the pleasant, easy-going days before the war, the Robinsons entertained in generous, refined style, troops of friends and some of the leading celebrities of London society. Indeed, Dudley House acquired fresh fame and increased popularity, for it was there that the finest music in London could often be heard, in ideal surroundings that inspired the world's leading artistes—vocal and instrumental. One of Sir Joseph's keenest pleasures was to add to Dudley House some fresh work of art, *objet de vertu*, or rare furniture, of which he was an excellent judge.

A MILLIONAIRE'S SUPERSTITIONS

Most millionaires, and many monarchs, are superstitious, but many people were surprised to learn that such a shrewd, practical, hard-headed financier as Mr. Robinson was one of the most superstitious men in South Africa. For instance, in the old days Mr. Robinson would not take a lighted match from anyone; if he had no match and wanted to light his cigarette one had to hand him a match *unstruck*. To hand him the match after it had been struck was to offer him, in his opinion, exceedingly bad luck. Thus, those who were privileged to smoke cigarettes with Mr. Robinson always remembered not to first strike the match before offering it to him. Then, again, he was a fervent believer in black cats as mascots, and he once had peremptory instructions cabled that a favourite black feline, left behind in South Africa, should be promptly shipped to Dudley House. What would have been the great millionaire's state of mind if anything had happened to that cat during the voyage one can scarcely imagine!

ROBINSON THE MAN

In his prime Joseph Robinson was a robust, well-built man, alert, pugnacious, full of energy, with florid features, strong jaw, and keen blue eyes, which pierced you like a diamond drill. Longer than most men did he retain his sight, his memory and his wind; the only physical flaw in what the French would call a good animal was his defective hearing. But, with characteristic shrewdness, he contrived to transform this infirmity into a "bull point." Did you ask him for his political views? He heard easily, waxed voluble,

and interesting. But if you referred to his financial operations or views he developed a decided difficulty in his hearing ; what one may term a diplomatic difficulty ! Some people were disposed to regard him as rather Scotch in the handling of his money. But those who knew him and his scheme of life could have told many authentic stories about his generosity to those in need. When his bank was flourishing in London, his *alter ego*, James Tyhurst, could have disclosed little secrets about " J.B.'s " generosity that would have rather surprised his critics. It is doubtful whether South Africa has produced six equally all-round men as Sir Joseph. In his time he has played many parts—storekeeper, diamond dealer, diamond expert prospector, mining expert, political polemist, newspaper proprietor, consultant politician, art collector, mining magnate, financier, banker. In his busy life he acquired the reputation of being a clever, fluent and convincing speaker, a litigant who went bald-headed for any man who had incurred his wrath in a business transaction. Then he is a thorough sportsman, a good soldier, as his former record on Commando amply proves. Of his financial record, why speak ? Are not his exploits chronicled in the mining manuals and Stock Exchange records of his period ? He was as good a judge of a horse as of a mine. Across country in the old days he led many a Shire sportsman an exciting dance. As a yachtsman he navigated with the best. Who does not remember his beautiful craft " La Belle Sauvage," on which the late King Edward, when Prince of Wales, spent many happy hours ?

ANALYSIS OF HIS CAREER

Analysing his career with its amazing financial success, his polemical tournaments ; his political experiences and pronouncements and his constant clashes with his contemporaries, one arrives at the conclusion that, on financial and political balance Joseph Robinson was not, in many respects, fairly treated by the Press of South Africa or of London. His reputation and *prestige* were discounted, if not damaged, by a steady stream of criticism and denigrement sometimes spontaneous, but occasionally inspired by men who appeared to regard Robinson's independent spirit as a nuisance, if not a sort of social crime. He had strong views ; he expressed them with equal

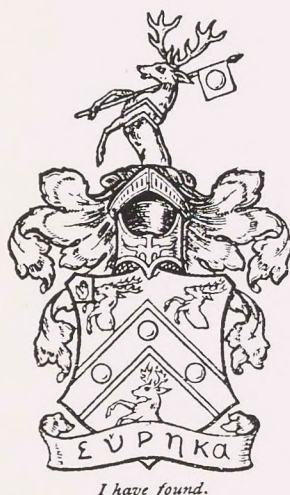
strength and persistence. Frequently, those views rather disturbed the schemes of some of his colleagues. He had the cross-bench mind ; could appreciate the schemes and motives of both Boer and British ; never hesitated to express his sentiments about either camp. But, on balance, the facts appear to establish the disinterestedness of his actions as of his speeches ; his innate desire to see the two peoples working together in harmony for the common good of a beautiful country ; his realisation of the fact that while the two antagonistic parties were squabbling over sterile political theories the country's enormous wealth in gold, silver, diamonds and other valuable resources were not being developed to the maximum. And he realised the ghastly stupidity of it all. Political hostility, which produced tragic results. But one may fairly say that if all South Africans, British and Boer had been as sincere in their yearning for mutual fruitful co-operation and the burying of the political hatchet, as Joseph Robinson, South Africa would have been a far richer and happier country than it is to-day.



*By the late
Constance
Penstone,*



Sir Joseph Robinson with his son and two daughters arriving from South Africa at Southampton in 1920.



SIR JOSEPH ROBINSON'S BARONETCY.

From the African World Annual, 1908.

In Sir Joseph Robinson we have South Africa's first Baronet, but he will always live in the memory of the present generation of South Africans as "J. B. R." He is, perhaps the only South African who has been able to enjoy the delights and charm of London without surrendering to them. Though he lives in Park Lane, his heart is in South Africa. He is as keenly watchful of South African events from his Park Lane library as he would be if his days were spent in the Johannesburg offices of the companies he controls. When the iron hand of Crown Colony Government was upon the Transvaal, and the Boer leaders, like Achilles of old, were sulking in their tents, Sir Joseph was also biding his time; but when the time came for South Africans to take charge of the destinies of their own country, and the advice of established South Africans was sought for, "J. B." stepped into the fray promptly, and has been one of the silent strong men behind South African affairs ever since. He was the first head of a big house to see that the welfare of the



The Countess Labia and her two sturdy little sons, Joseph and Lucio Mussolini—grandsons of Sir Joseph and Lady Robinson.

mining industry was indissolubly linked with the welfare of the whole country. When most of the leaders of the mining industry were trying to form an *imperium in imperio*, Sir Joseph Robinson came forward with the (at that time) startling statement that he was a South African first and a mining magnate afterwards. He preached the unpopular doctrine of the unity of interests to his fellow magnates. His support was invaluable to the newly fledged Transvaal Government. He encouraged them to keep the ideal of coming Nationhood. When General Botha had constituted his Cabinet, it was again Sir Joseph who acted as their unofficial and disinterested adviser in placing before the young Premier and his colleagues many sound and excellent suggestions for the new Gold Law—drawn up not only in the interests of the mining industry, but in such an equitable manner to all parties concerned, particularly in making absolute the future security of the vast interests affected, that the immediate confidence of the capitalists of the world was regained, with the result in appreciation of values as seen since. It was a great thing, too, in those days—only a few years ago—for anyone to plough “the lonely furrow,” but those who have known J. B. R. from his younger days in Kimberley and watched his subsequent records at the Rand were not surprised. Sir Joseph has always had the courage of his opinions, even when quite alone in the fight. When nearly all of us—and it is no use blinking the fact—believed the industry could not be saved without Chinese labour remaining permanently on the Rand, and when even old experts on the subject doubted the possibility of the necessary native labour being procurable, he staggered not only the City, but even many of his best friends in South Africa, by the boldly expressed opinion that, given proper recruiting organisations, there were more Kaffirs available for mining purposes in South Africa than the mines could employ. At the time the statement seemed almost too good to be true. To-day Sir Joseph can place to his credit the absolute fulfilment of his prophecy. The last shipload of yellow men will leave the mines of the Witwatersrand for good within the next eighteen months, and, owing to the new arrangements in which all interests affected are heartily co-operating, vast new areas within South Africa hitherto unexploited, in Zululand, Cape Colony, and other districts,

are yielding more than the labour required. Truly a splendid tribute to the policy of the "lonely furrow."

When Sir Joseph Robinson came last to the Rand he found the great city in a whirl of excitement. Each political party was fever heat, working its hardest for triumph. Yet all the while poverty was rampant. Soup kitchens were the order of the day. Thousands of unemployed and discontented residents were ready to welcome him as a magnate who saw things from the South African viewpoint.

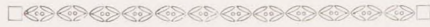
These unemployed—not the British type, but keen, energetic men of independence and courage—were then thick in the streets of Johannesburg. Sir Joseph Robinson gave his first attention to their position. That afternoon a thousand men had gathered around the Carlton Hotel and were cheering Sir Joseph, who waved to them from an upper balcony. It was the first time a Rand magnate had been cheered in his own city. It was the sign of a new era, the dawn of a new political day, the birth of a new South African spirit.

Since then we have heard nothing from South Africa but reports of steady progress. Sir J. B. Robinson has been in the thick of it, and working strenuously on behalf of the new nation struggling to find itself. Subsequent events have been too recent to permit of broad criticism. You cannot judge the action of yesterday by the results of to-day. One can only watch the trend of things and guess at likely results from the course the ship is sailing. As things are in South Africa at this moment one is entitled to look forward with the greatest confidence to the future. Never before has one been entitled to do so, and yet one cannot resist the reflection that had poor old "Oom Paul," grand in many of his grim and often too ultra-conservative adhesions to mediaeval political ideals for these modern times, only turned a more ready ear to the friendly counsels given him so freely and urged so frequently upon his adoption by Sir Joseph in days before the conflict—other and perhaps less sorrowful records would have fallen to be inscribed. Yet, despite the sad experiences of the interim, South Africa is certainly again justifying all the optimism which Sir Joseph has so consistently upheld. Indeed, the sunny land has for the first time a definite and happy future before it. After a most tortuous history we have come into smooth



A scene amongst the Pines of the Cape in the Shadow of the
Lion's Head.

Family Members at Hawthornden.



The Countess Ida Labia.

His Excellency Count Natale Labia,
Minister Plenipotentiary and Consul General
for Italy in South Africa.Miss Florence Robinson
and her fiancé.Commander Count Reineiri Biscia,
recently promoted as a Captain in the Italian
Navy and Delegate of the Italian Government
to the League of Nations, Geneva.

water, where progress is possible. The ship of State, after being buffeted about in the heaviest seas, with its rigging entangled and the whole crew in open mutiny, is at last riding trim on an even keel. Sir Joseph Robinson's temporary presence on the bridge helped to reconcile the quarrelsome crew, and he has marked a course by which South Africa is now steering to success and prosperity, and for this alone has richly earned the distinguished honour conferred upon him by His Majesty a few months ago, and which all of us hope he will be spared to enjoy for many long years to come.

L.W.



In an Old Cape Garden.



The Right Hon. General J. C. Smuts, C.H., K.C., M.L.A.
Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, 1919-24.

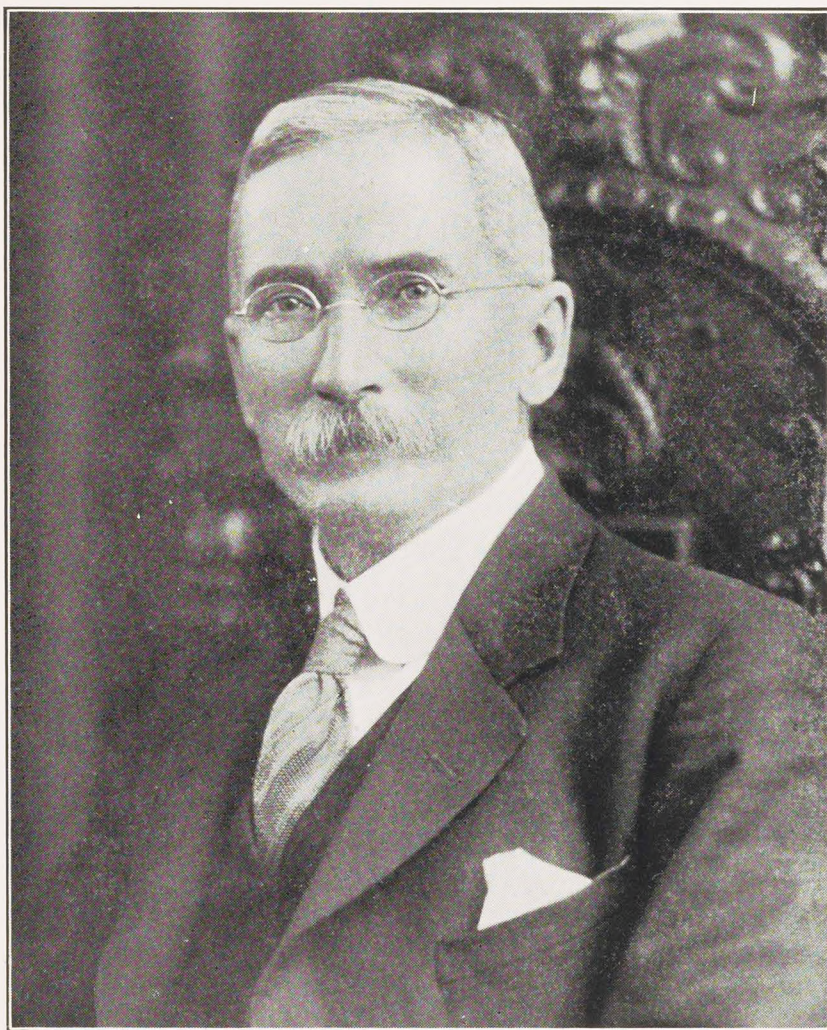
THE GREAT FUTURE OF SOUTH AFRICA

A Special Message to the "African World Annual," 1908, by
SIR JOSEPH ROBINSON, BART.

The great future of South Africa lies at the present time in the hands of the members of the Convention. Up to within a very short period their deliberations have gone along quite smoothly, but they have now come to the crucial point which will test the statesmanship of their best men throughout the country. The bone of contention at the moment is the question as to which shall be the capital of United Africa.

The native matter has also been a very difficult problem to solve, but its difficulties, so far as I can gather, have been overcome, and there is no doubt that if unification takes place the native question will be dealt with in a fair spirit, and with a full determination not only to protect but to advance the interests of the natives throughout the country.

The matter of the capital is, however, a very serious one. Cape Town, with all its traditions of the past, adheres tenaciously to the belief that it must be the capital. There is a very strong feeling in the country about this. Cape Town is, no doubt, a very delightful place; its suburbs are lovely, its climate is splendid, and all the comforts and pleasures which can be derived in the colony are to be found at the Cape. The distance from the Cape to Natal, however, is considerable, and the people in the Transvaal maintain that Pretoria should be the sacred spot. Neither side seems willing to give way, and it will certainly tax the intelligence of the delegates to establish a *modus vivendi* to settle this much-disputed question. It will, indeed, be deplorable if no way can be found to adjust this matter, thus causing the Convention to end in failure. It is fortunate that the Convention will adjourn until towards the end of January. It will give the members time to think over the position very seriously,



General the Hon. J. B. M. Hertzog, P.C., K.C., M.L.A.

and to try to elaborate some plan which will be acceptable to the conflicting interests in the various States.

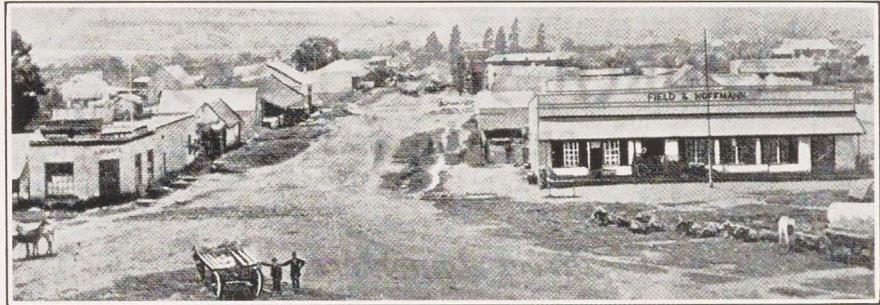
I believe yet that if this question is seriously tackled a way will be found, and from what I can gather all the members of the Convention are sincere, and are very anxious to see the measure a success. There are none of them, to my knowledge, who believe for a moment that to wreck the work which has already been done will in any way improve the position of the country.

We must not forget that unification of the States means the advancement of the whole country. All debatable questions which have caused such friction in the past, such as Customs dues, railway tariffs, unnecessary expenditure, will be settled on proper business lines. Economy will be carried out in all departments, and from that moment South Africa will forge ahead. There will be no further losses on railways, as the Government tariff throughout the State will be so adjusted as to leave a profit on the railway lines. Large sums of money will be saved in other ways ; economy will be strictly carried out in all departments, and the credit of the country will be established on a sound financial basis. Racial feeling, which has hitherto exercised such a baneful influence on the progress of the country, will be eradicated, and the future of the country assured. Its great resources will be developed for the benefit of all the States.

To wreck a scheme which promises such advantages, and is so pregnant with future possibilities, would indeed be suicidal, and unworthy of the intellectual capacity of exponents of public opinion.

I saw so clearly the great boon which unification would confer upon South Africa, and the marvellous changes which would result from it to benefit the condition of the people, that I took a prominent part in advocating it as against federation during my last visits to South Africa, and I should feel it most acutely if the Convention were to end in failure. My faith, however, remains unshaken, and I firmly believe the delegates will win, and that the Convention will emerge triumphant from its labours.

Dudley House,
LONDON, W., Dec. 16, 1908.



Pretoria in 1875.



On the Pniel Diamond Diggings, 1875.



Ferreira's Camp, Johannesburg 1886.

J. B. ROBINSON, Esq.

(From the "Cape Argus," 1889)

It has been by no mere stroke of luck that Mr. Robinson has reached the position in which he stands to-day. In July, 1886, just after the discovery of conglomerate at Witwatersrand, Mr. Robinson decided to leave Kimberley for the Transvaal, on a tour of inspection. Barberton, as we all remember, was all the rage at the time. Nevertheless, Mr. Robinson decided to leave the coach at Potchefstroom, with a view to first visiting the reported discoveries of conglomerate. He lost no time over the business ; but set off in a private conveyance. There was nothing to indicate to any ordinary observer the marvellous riches of the Rand. There were a few cross cuts in one or two places on the reef, but Mr. Robinson soon satisfied himself by panning that the "banket" was payable ; and the discovery was promptly followed up by his travelling along the line of the outcrop, which he found to be both continuous and extensive. He had the most profound faith in the quality of the reef, and decided at once to secure by purchase some of the properties which he considered to be of value. One of these was the Langlaagte, now held by the Langlaagte Estate and Gold Mining Company (Limited). This was the first property bought by Mr. Robinson, and this was followed up by the purchase of the property now famous as the Robinson Gold Mining Company. Mr. Robinson also secured numerous interests along the line of reef ; and eventually bought the group of seven farms now belonging to the Randfontein Estate and Gold Mining Company, in extent nearly 30,000 acres. This property is traversed by a series of reefs which run throughout the whole length of the ground, and form a most extensive area of auriferous ore.

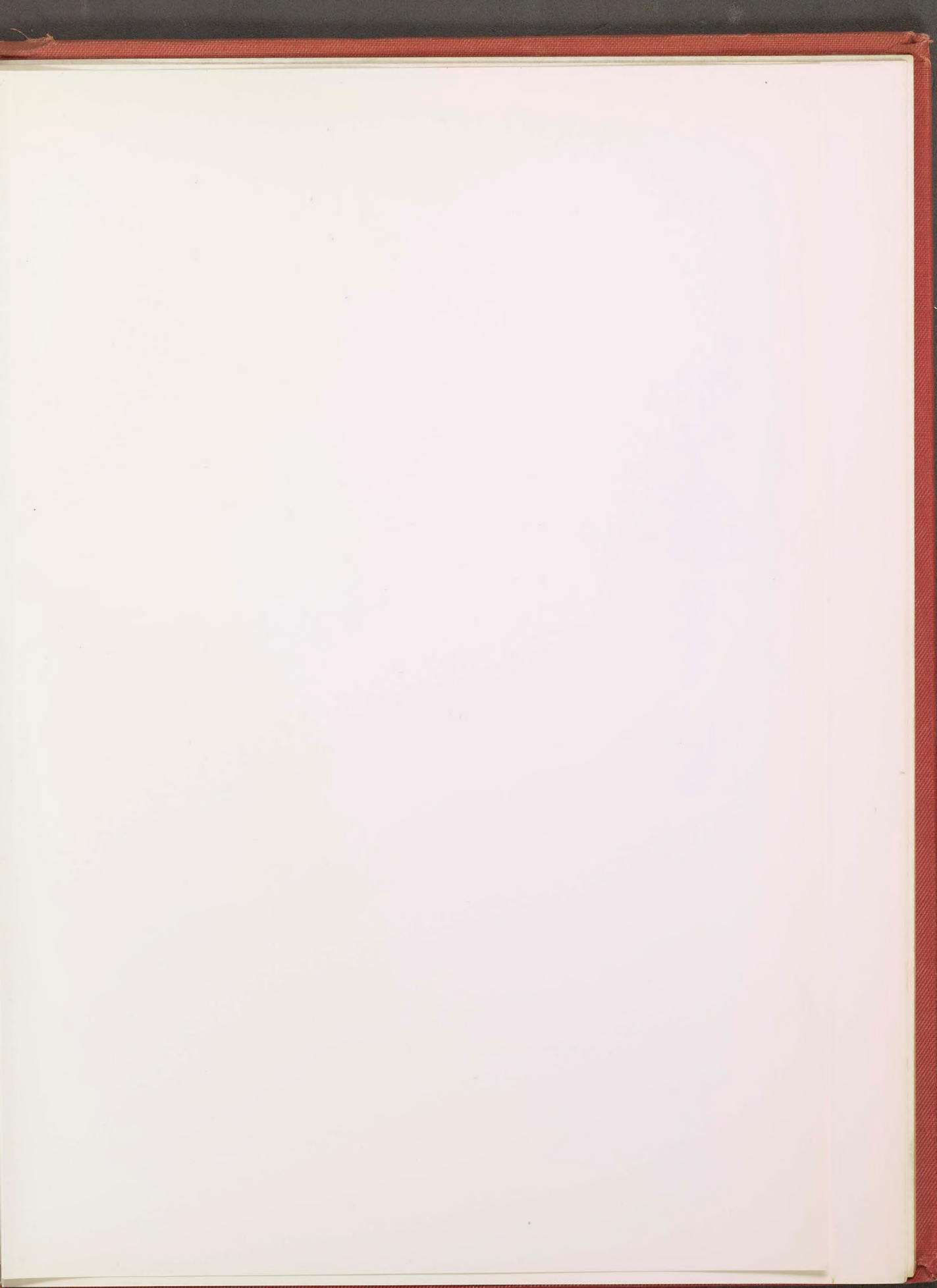
The experience which Mr. Robinson gained upon the Diamond Fields was of great service to him, and those connected with him; and the Langlaagte and Robinson Companies are proofs to-day of the work which he has done for the development and proper

working of the Witwatersrand Gold Fields. Mr. Marcus Marcus is connected with Mr. Robinson in these undertakings, and this gentleman has also contributed his share in developing and securing the success of the ventures in which he and Mr. Robinson have been engaged. They have given their time and attention exclusively to the management and working of the Langlaagte property, and to them great credit is due for the position in which the Langlaagte Estate stands to-day. When Mr. Robinson first bought the property he was laughed to scorn by those who professed to have an extensive knowledge of mining and of gold.

Mr. Robinson is South African by birth, and has always shown a spirit of enterprise and most undoubted energy, worthy of the born colonist. When the first diamond was discovered in 1867, although quite a young man at the time he was one of the first to go up to the Vaal River, and follow up the discovery: just in the same way, we find him twenty years afterwards first on the Witwatersrand Gold Fields, and leading the way in developing and mining on those fields in a proper manner. This he firmly believes to be the great country of the future, possessing, as it does, unlimited stores of mineral wealth.



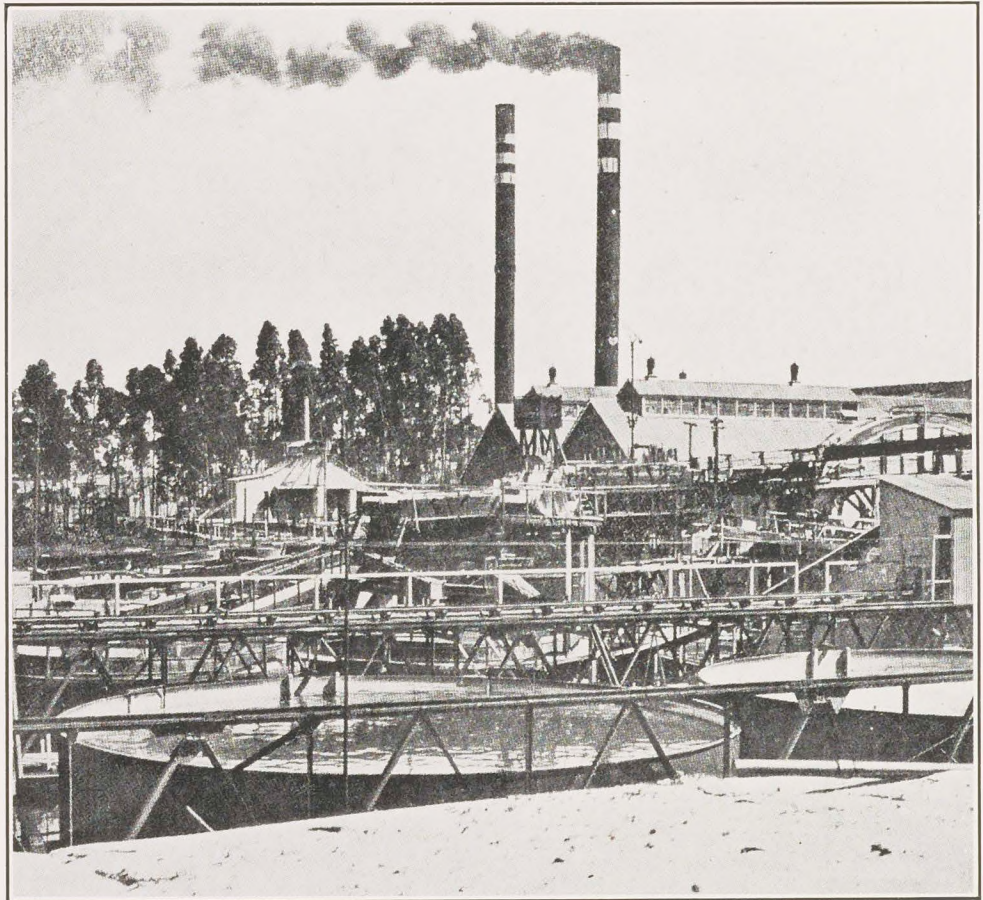
En route to the Goldfields in 1886.



The Robinson Gold Mine

WITWATERSRAND

1887 — 1926



One of the greatest gold producers and Dividend payers of the World, the Robinson Gold Mine has yielded the precious metal to the value of 25 Millions Sterling since it started working in 1887. Sir Joseph Robinson was its first Chairman and disposed of his controlling interest in this wonderful property to the WERNHER BEIT Group in 1889.

Witwatersrand Gold Production from May, 1887, to December, 1928.

Year.	Tons Milled.	Fine Gold.	Value at £4.24773 per fine oz.
		Ozs.	£
1887	—	19,080	81,045
1888	—	171,789	729,715
1889	—	306,167	1,300,514
1890	—	408,569	1,735,491
1891	—	601,810	2,556,328
1892	—	1,011,743	4,297,610
1893	2,215,413	1,221,171	5,187,206
1894	2,830,885	1,639,252	6,963,100
1895	3,456,575	1,845,875	7,840,779
1896	4,011,697	1,851,422	7,864,341
1897	5,325,355	2,491,503	10,583,616
1898	7,331,446	3,564,581	15,141,376
1899	6,639,355	3,317,857	14,093,363
1900	—	—	—
1901	412,006	238,877	1,014,687
1902	3,416,813	1,690,096	7,179,074
1903	6,105,016	2,859,482	12,146,307
1904	8,058,295	3,653,794	15,520,329
1905	11,160,422	4,706,433	19,991,658
1906	13,571,554	5,559,534	23,615,400
1907	15,523,229	6,220,227	26,421,837
1908	18,196,589	6,782,538	28,810,393
1909	20,543,759	7,039,136	29,900,359
1910	21,432,541	7,228,311	30,703,912
1911	23,888,258	7,896,802	33,543,479
1912	25,486,361	8,753,568	37,182,795
1913	25,628,432	8,430,998	35,812,605
1914	25,701,954	8,033,570	34,124,434
1915	28,314,579	8,772,919	37,264,992
1916	28,525,252	8,971,359	38,107,909
1917	27,251,960	8,714,686	37,017,633
1918	24,922,763	8,198,029	34,823,017
1919	24,043,638	8,111,271	34,454,478
1920	24,096,277	7,949,585	33,767,691
1921	23,400,605	7,924,534	33,661,281
1922	19,512,614	6,813,172	28,940,515
1923	26,538,875	8,904,401	37,823,491
1924	28,209,073	9,352,396	39,726,453
1925	28,303,108	9,346,697	39,702,245
1926	29,485,572	9,666,901	41,062,385
1927	29,133,717	9,726,866	41,317,101
1928	30,045,100	9,907,188	42,039,869
Grand Totals	—	220,547,290	936,782,150

The stupendous total value of a thousand million sterling was reached by the Witwatersrand Gold Mines early in 1929.

THE WONDERFUL RECORD OF SIR

THE LANGLAAGTE ESTATE

RECORD OF CRUSHINGS, RECOVERY, PROFITS, & DIVIDENDS

Year.	Tons crushed.	Recovery. Oz. fine Gold.	Value of Output.		Profit.		Dividends Per cent.
			£	Per ton.	£	Per ton.	
1887	—	1,420	1,470	—	—	—	—
1888	4,207	9,998	34,993	—	—	—	—
1889	53,089	61,755	222,329	72/1	122,281	34/4	29
1890	69,819	56,750	201,355	57/9	55,146	15/11	15
1891	71,098	54,607	196,408	55/4	70,574	19/11	10
1892	197,201	88,981	310,970	31/6	112,143	11/4	20
1893	224,065	104,911	361,155	32/2	114,757	10/2	30
1894	259,016	146,369	476,304	36/10	164,309	12/5	45
1895	245,439	140,919	445,980	36/4	130,962	10/7	50
1896	236,229	106,883	342,385	29/—	93,079	8/—	30
1897	305,414	127,795	424,292	27/9	142,870	9/4	30
1898	274,027	129,783	419,947	30/8	137,843	10/1	30
1899	208,613	87,805	—	—	—	—	15
1900	} Boer War period.	Crushing suspended,	Oct., 1899 — April, 1902.				
1901							
1902	134,483	58,665	246,571	36/8	91,312	13/6	—
1903	257,168	102,258	429,597	33/5	111,995	8/9	20
1904	267,807	100,569	427,378	31/11	120,762	9/—	20
1905	314,068	100,394	427,110	27/2	114,230	7/3	20
1906	340,585	110,245	470,356	27/7	153,089	9/—	20
1907	383,034	132,282	562,811	29/5	225,953	11/9	20

JOSEPH ROBINSON'S PIONEER MINE.**AND GOLD MINING CO., LTD.****SINCE THE COMMENCEMENT OF OPERATIONS 41 YEARS AGO.**

Year.	Tons crushed.	Recovery. Oz. fine Gold.	Value of Output.		Profit.		Dividends Per cent.
			£	Per ton.	£	Per ton.	
1908	568,375	177,863	751,694	26/5	286,939	10/1	20
1909	599,216	186,893	787,070	26/3	305,874	10/2	25
1910	629,614	202,257	848,618	26/11	315,194	10/-	30
1911	625,187	175,497	736,854	23/7	197,833	6/4	15
1912	635,353	174,171	733,213	23/-	168,045	5/3	15
1913	620,622	160,366	675,274	21/9	144,883	4/8	10
1914	589,619	169,319	710,287	24/3	185,854	6/3	10
1915	612,297	167,600	710,215	23/2	164,736	5/4	15
1916	595,507	166,363	700,619	23/6	157,061	5/3	5
1917	539,618	145,871	621,601	23/-	112,962	4/2	10
1918	533,960	152,283	647,999	24/3	139,083	5/3	12½
1919	475,480	139,080	650,368	27/4	146,989	6/2	15
1920	465,300	138,773	774,032	33/3	153,353	6/7	10
1921	479,300	147,197	779,037	32/6	149,756	6/3	12½
1922	457,756	146,733	676,807	29/6	163,727	7/2	7½
1923*	1,180,100	340,996	1,544,789	26/2	373,492	6/3	17½
1924	1,147,900	311,231	1,320,098	23/1	310,377	5/5	12½
1925	934,000	262,433	1,125,418	24/-	139,977	3/-	5
1926	950,000	274,084	1,168,469	24/7	205,132	4/4	12½
1927	964,500	283,999	1,209,551	25/1	240,901	5/-	12½
1928	970,000	303,132	1,291,471	26/8	282,651	5/10	15

* Consolidated Langlaagte Mines, Ltd., absorbed, May, 1923.

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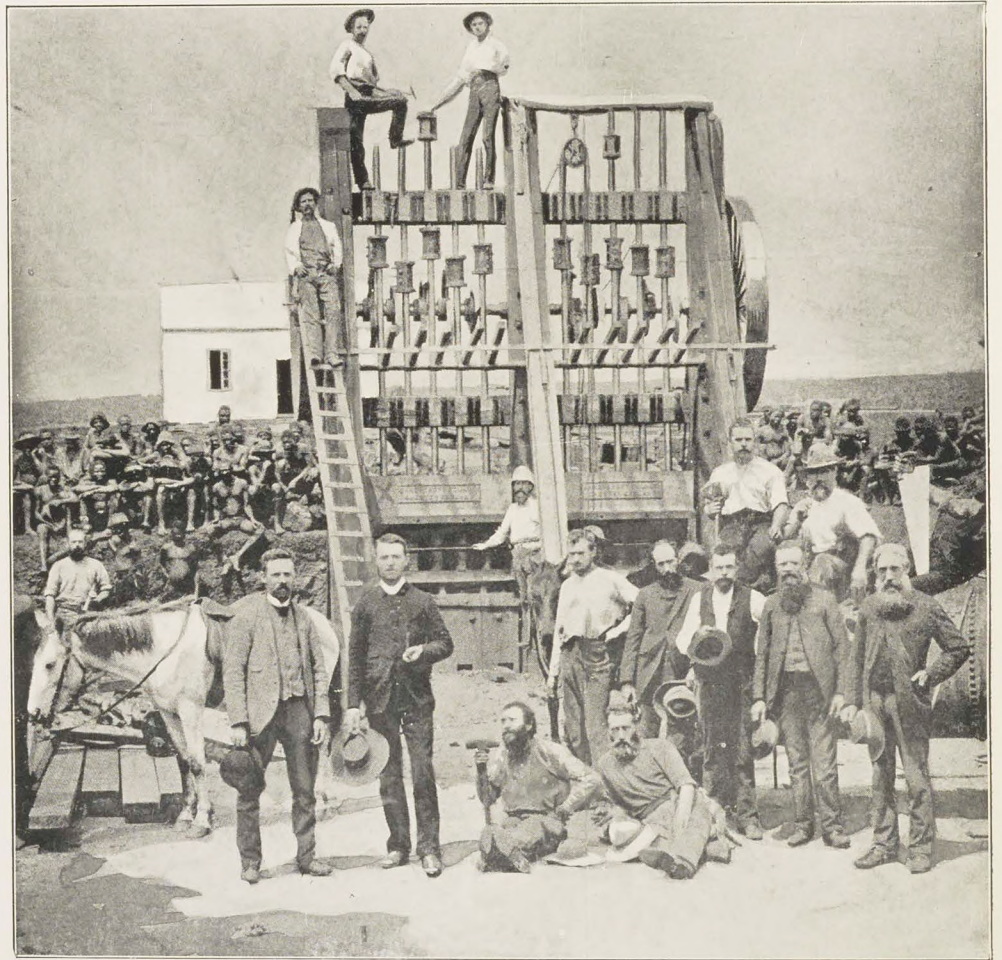
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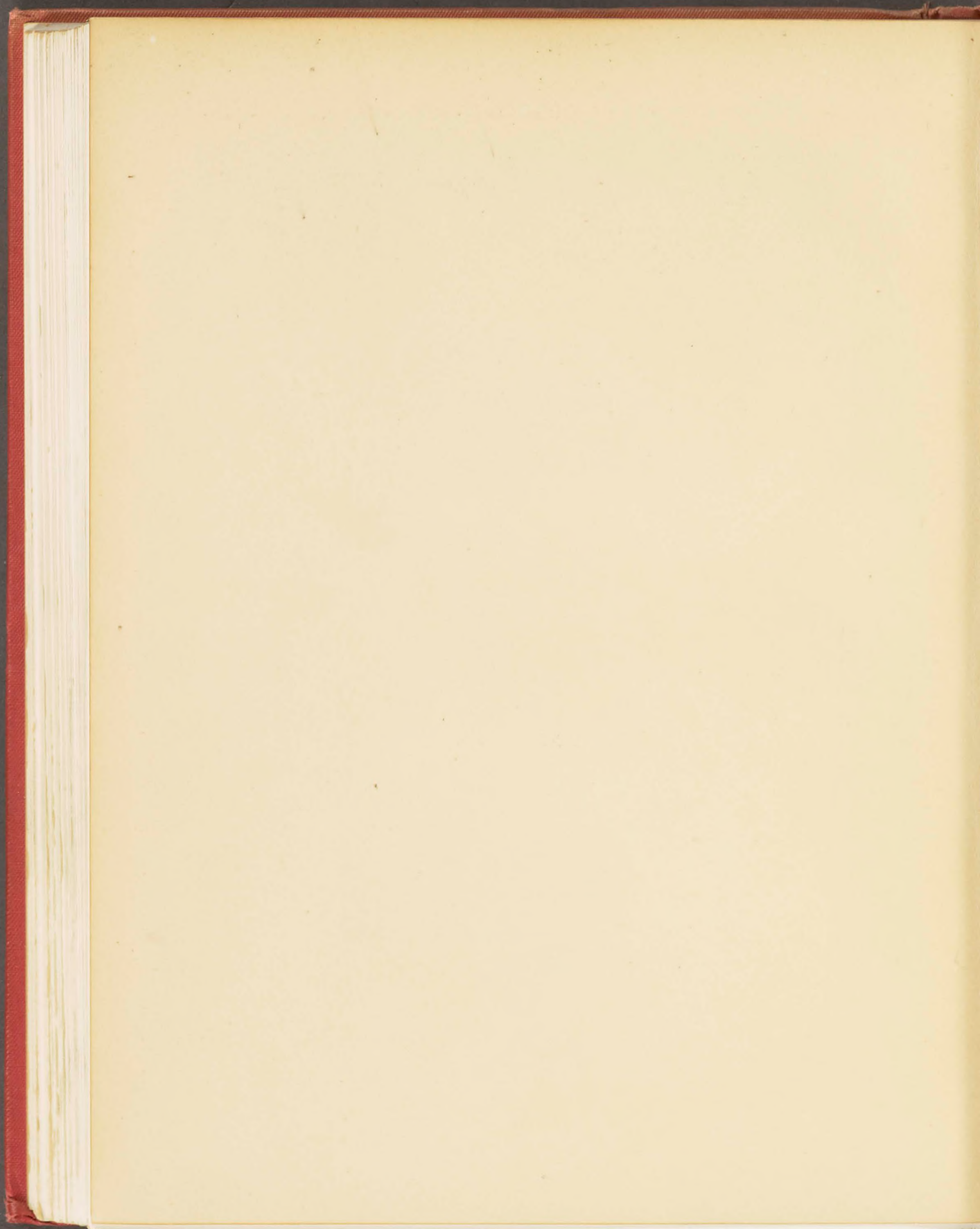
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